



**REGION OF WATERLOO**

**PLANNING, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**  
**Community Planning**

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**TO:** Chair Jim Wideman and Members of the Planning and Works Committee

**DATE:** April 21, 2009

**FILE CODE:** D03-06

**SUBJECT: ALLOCATION OF REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP FUND**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT the Region of Waterloo endorse, on an interim basis, the framework for administering the Regional Stewardship Fund described in Report P-09-036, dated April 21, 2009

**SUMMARY:**

In the 2008 and 2009 Regional Budgets, an Environmental Stewardship Fund was established with a present total allocation of \$300,000. Staff has been requested to develop a framework for allocating the moneys from the fund to stewardship initiatives. This report proposes six categories of initiatives. Each category has an overall objective to be achieved by projects in this category. In order to assist in the evaluation of individual stewardship proposals, several criteria are presented, two of which must be fulfilled. Following review, all submitted applications will be forwarded to Regional Council for consideration (i.e., quarterly or more frequently if required).

**REPORT:**

The Region of Waterloo strives to promote environmental sustainability in its Official Plan policies, programs, and other actions. This is a reflection of the values of the community. In the 2008 Regional Budget, Council approved an initial contribution of \$100,000 to an Environmental Stewardship Fund. This was supplemented by a further \$200,000 in the approved 2009 Budget. As part of the Region's Earth Day 2009 observance, staff are proposing an interim framework by which the Environmental Stewardship Fund can be initiated and administered. After this framework has been in operation (for a year or two), staff will be in a better position to recommend that it be adopted on a more permanent basis or modified as appropriate.

During the latter months of 2008, several projects were identified as potential recipients of funding from the Environmental Stewardship Fund. These include:

- rehabilitation of a badly-eroding reach of a stream that has become a concern to the Laurel Creek Headwaters Environmentally Sensitive Landscape Public Liaison Committee
- general tree-planting and natural habitat enhancements discussed by the ESL Liaison Committee
- designing, producing, and installing distinctive signage within the Laurel Creek Headwaters Environmentally Sensitive Landscape
- contributing to environmentally-focused studies such as one on the future of The Wilmot Line within the Laurel Creek Headwaters Environmentally Sensitive Landscape
- installing small animal crossings beneath Regional Roads at locations where road-kill of amphibians is regularly observed
- purchasing ecologically-significant properties adjacent to Regional Forests or within ESLs that come on the market

- promoting public education and awareness of specific environmental issues.

In addition, considerable attention has recently been given to the proto-type Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) pilot projects now operating in Norfolk County as well as Prince Edward Island and rural municipalities in Manitoba and Alberta. In brief, ALUS programs provide monetary payments to farmers for “environmental goods and services” provided on their farms. These include wildlife habitat, buffering streams to enhance water quality, and retirement of marginal lands. Given the potential of a continent-wide carbon emissions cap-and-trade system, there may also be substantial financial incentives for carbon sequestrations by planting woodlands and grasslands in an ALUS-type program. A workshop held in Guelph by the Ontario ALUS Alliance on March 27, 2009 brought together a wide array of potential stakeholders who were encouraged to sign on to a “Statement of Support” of the vision and purpose of the Alliance. It is anticipated that an ALUS program would require funding from the Federal or Provincial governments.

**Categories of Eligible Projects**

Based on discussion to date, it is proposed that the Environmental Stewardship Fund be utilised to support the following categories of projects:

1. Enhancement and restoration of natural areas and the linkages and corridors among them
2. Naturalisation of roadsides, trails, or areas on the grounds of Regional facilities using drought-tolerant native species
3. Acquisition of ecologically significant natural areas within Environmentally Sensitive Policy Areas, Environmentally Sensitive Landscapes, or adjacent to Regional Forests
4. Public education and awareness initiatives on some aspect of environmental sustainability with particular relevance to Waterloo Region
5. Environmental or sustainability-based research being carried out at post-secondary institutions within the Region
6. Environmental stewardship–related research carried out by a student at a high school or post-secondary institution or by a member of a recognised naturalist, agricultural, or environmental organisation.
7. Demonstration projects promoting waste reduction, water conservation, energy conservation, remediation of contamination

The following table presents the seven proposed categories of projects that could be considered for full or partial funding from the Environmental Stewardship Fund. Each category contains an objective which must be fulfilled by the project. In addition, there are several criteria, at least two of which must be fulfilled if funding is to be considered.

<b>Categories of Projects to be Funded by the Regional Environmental Stewardship Fund</b>
<p><b>1. Enhancement and Restoration of Natural Areas</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> to restore the ecological quality of natural areas within a Landscape Level Feature, Core Environmental Feature, or Supporting Feature as identified in the Regional Official Plan (once approved) which have been degraded or damaged, and is endorsed by the Ecological and Environmental Advisory Committee and/or an Environmentally Sensitive Landscape Public Liaison Committee.</p> <p><b>Criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creates new linkages or corridors among natural features or enhances existing ones</li> <li>• improves aquatic habitat within streams</li> <li>• creates eco-passages that facilitate wildlife movement beneath roads to reduce road-kill and/or reduce hazards to drivers</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• controls infestations of invasive non-native species</li> <li>• involves youth, schools, neighbourhood associations, service clubs, or naturalist groups</li> <li>• attracts matching funds from other funding organizations</li> <li>• provides opportunities for increasing local knowledge and expertise of environmental stewardship</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Naturalisation of Roadsides, Trails, or Regional Facilities</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> to establish low-maintenance, drought-tolerant, locally-indigenous vegetation along the side of a Regional Road or a public trail.</p> <p><b>Criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not part of an ongoing public infrastructure project</li> <li>• is in proximity to existing natural features or Major Urban Greenspaces</li> <li>• uses drought-tolerant native species</li> <li>• is supported by the Kissing Bridge Trailway Advisory Board or an Area Municipal trail advisory committee</li> <li>• attracts native pollinators</li> <li>• involves youth, schools, or community associations</li> <li>• provides opportunity for public education about naturalisation</li> <li>• attracts matching funds or in-kind contributions from other funding organizations</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Acquisition of Ecologically Significant Natural Areas</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> to help bring high quality natural areas within a Landscape Level Feature or Core Environmental Feature as identified in the Regional Official Plan (once approved), into the ownership of a “conservation body” as defined by the Conservation Lands Act.</p> <p><b>Criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• property lies adjacent to a Regional Forest, Conservation Area, or Area Municipal parkland, or can serve a linkage function between high quality natural areas</li> <li>• land contains rare habitat or significant species</li> <li>• is supported by the Ecological and Environmental Advisory Committee</li> <li>• attracts matching funds from other funding organizations or contribution from seller/donor</li> <li>• will not entail substantial outlays for remediation or stewardship</li> <li>• provides opportunities for public education or research</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Public Education and Awareness Initiatives</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> to increase public awareness of environmental conservation and stewardship</p> <p><b>Criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is supported by a Regional advisory committee, and/or Area Municipal environmental advisory committee</li> <li>• has the potential to reach and/or involve significant numbers of the Region’s citizens</li> <li>• promotes better stewardship of Landscape Level Features or Core Environmental Features as identified in the Regional Official Plan (once approved) consistent with Regional policy</li> <li>• involves youth, schools, or community associations</li> <li>• attracts matching funds or in-kind contributions from other funding organizations</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Environmental or Sustainability-Based Research</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> to carry out a project to increase knowledge of environmental or sustainability issues of particular relevance to Waterloo Region which is endorsed by the Ecological and Environmental Advisory Committee, the Water Efficiency Advisory Committee, and/or the <i>ad hoc</i> Environmental Advisory Committee,</p> <p><b>Criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is being carried out at a high school or post-secondary institution within the Region</li> </ul>

- has applicability to situations typically encountered within the Region
- has the potential to generate local business opportunities and/or employment
- attracts matching funds from other funding organizations
- provides opportunities for increasing local knowledge and expertise of environmental stewardship

**6. Environmental Stewardship–related Research**

**Objective:** to carry out a project to increase theoretical and practical expertise in the stewardship of the ecological and natural resources of Waterloo Region which is endorsed by the Ecological and Environmental Advisory Committee, and/or the *ad hoc* Environmental Advisory Committee, and/or an Environmentally Sensitive Landscape Public Liaison Committee.

**Criteria:**

- carried out by a student(s) at a high school or post-secondary institution or by a member(s) of a recognised naturalist, agricultural, or environmental organisation.
- involves youth, schools, neighbourhood associations, service clubs, or naturalist groups
- attracts matching funds or in-kind contributions from other organizations including the GRCA or Area Municipalities
- creates opportunities for the enhancement of natural habitat or local production of food
- contributes to building community capacity with respect to local stewardship

**7. Demonstration Projects Promoting Conservation**

**Objective:** to implement theoretical knowledge of conserving energy, water, natural resources, or reducing waste or remediating contamination or air, soil, or water.

**Criteria:**

- is supported by a Regional advisory committee and/or staff
- involves a local educational institution, small business, public interest group, or agricultural or environmental association
- has the potential to generate local business opportunities and/or employment
- is designed to communicate results to the public
- attracts matching funds from other funding organizations

**Mechanisms for Allocating Moneys from Environmental Stewardship Fund**

An efficient and accountable structure is required for evaluating proposals, dispersing funds, and auditing expenditures. It is proposed that quarterly deadlines would be set for applying for funds. Applications would be screened by Planning, Housing and Community Services staff and, if appropriate, referred to a relevant advisory committee (i.e., Ecological and Environmental Advisory Committee) or to technical staff (i.e., Water Efficiency) for further evaluation against the criteria for the type of project. Project proposals falling somewhat outside the interim framework, but nonetheless deemed to be of outstanding merit, could also be considered. Once an application had been endorsed in principle, successful applicants would be requested to submit a detailed proposal with a schedule of payments for sub-components of the project. Once a quarter, or as otherwise required, all completed applications supported either by technical advisory committees or staff would be submitted to Council for consideration.

Allocations from the Environmental Stewardship Fund and the projects they had funded would be summarised in an annual report to Council each year to provide for public accountability. Community Planning staff would provide periodic liaison with the applicant project teams to ensure that funds are being properly spent.

To publicise the Environmental; Stewardship Fund in the community, it is recommended that an informative brochure be prepared and also that a link be placed on the Region's website.

### **Area Municipal Consultation/Coordination**

Opportunities will be sought to partner with Area Municipalities in stewardship projects, where appropriate.

### **CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:**

The framework recommended in this report is intended to help achieve the objective of developing an integrated approach to environmental sustainability. It will form part of an integrated environmental promotion and education program.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The 2008 Regional Budget allocated \$100,000 to the Stewardship Fund, and an additional \$200,000 in the approved 2009 Budget, pending the development of criteria and procedures for administering the fund. The procedure recommended in this report will provide a transparent and accountable framework for allocating these funds to stewardship projects on an interim basis.

### **OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:**

Purchasing staff were consulted in the preparation of this report.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

NIL

**PREPARED BY:** *Chris Gosselin*, Manager of Environmental Planning

**APPROVED BY:** *Rob Horne*, Commissioner of Planning, Housing, and Community Services