
Agricultural Resource Lands Review
Analysis of Agricultural Resource Lands
within the Rural Areas of the County



Prepared for:
The United Counties of
Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry

Prepared by: Clark Consulting Services

November 2012
Revised—August 2014
Revised—January 2016





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CONSULTING SERVICES

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United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry

Date: November 2, 2012

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CCS Project No. 1585

Prepared for: Alison McDonald, United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry

Prepared by: **Clark Consulting Services**

1. INTRODUCTION

Clark Consulting Services (CCS) was retained by the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry to review selected areas designated as Agricultural Resource Lands. The purpose of this review was to determine if the identified lands should be retained in the Agricultural Resource designation.

1.1 Work Program

In undertaking this assignment, CCS prepared a detailed Work Program which included a review of the Official Plan, a review of the Soils Reports for Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Counties and a review of the Canada Land Inventory Mapping as well as the basis for the original Agricultural Resource designation.

This information and the land use in the selected areas was confirmed by a series of field trips. Recommendations were prepared based on the review of the information and the field trips.

This report presents the background to the designation of the Agricultural Resource lands in the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. The report outlines our review of the basis for the Agricultural Resource designation and our approach to the evaluation of those lands selected for review. The report concludes with a presentation of the results of this review and our recommendations.

An early version of this report was submitted and reviewed by Municipal Planning Staff and by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and their comments have been incorporated in this report.

1.2 Next Steps

The submission of this report represents the conclusion of this assignment for a series of review meetings that are scheduled to present and a presentation to County Council.

2. AGRICULTURE IN THE UNITED COUNTIES OF STORMONT, DUNDAS & GLENGARRY

Agriculture is a significant economic and land use activity in the United Counties. In addition to the actual growing of crops and raising of livestock, these activities support an extensive range of services such as equipment sales and service, livestock feed and support services and business and advisory services. The agricultural products are important inputs to food and processing industries in the United Counties and in the surrounding area. Farming also represents an important historical link to the past. From early settlement farm activities and need for cooperation among families for support and assistance has been an important element of community life and social organization.

The broad flat fertile plains and the more rugged hilly areas of the Counties became and continues to provide an important natural resource supporting farming activities. Although farming has and continues to change and evolve, this natural agricultural resource provides the basic building block on which agricultural production relies.

Recent studies and media reports identify a growing concern for large industrial scale farming operations. Economies of scale and declining profit margins as well as improved technologies, more efficient livestock production and higher yielding crops have encouraged larger and more specialized farms. Many of these operations are present in the United Counties. They require large investments and large land areas and can be vulnerable to unforeseen market forces and disruptions.

Agriculture is not a uniform land use. It can be categorized by size. The larger farming operations account for a significant amount of the production. However, many farming operations continue at their historic size with increasing issues of viability. New operations are exploring production of specialty crops and livestock on smaller acreages. Many of these crops are grown organically and marketed directly to consumers through roadside stands, farmers markets, cooperative processing and distribution or other direct to consumer arrangements.

Our review confirms that farming activities, although diverse and varied, continue to be an important land use in the United Counties. Together with other rural land uses such as aggregate and mineral production, waste disposal, solar and wind energy generation and increasing pressure for rural residential and recreational development, farming is part of the rural land use system. Agriculture plays an important role in this system. The protection of the



land base and particularly those areas capable of sustaining agriculture remains an important land use objective.

3. PROPOSAL

Planning in the context of the diverse rural land use system, must establish clear guidelines for future decisions while maintaining the flexibility to accommodate the variety of uses and interests within the rural area. The protection of Agricultural lands is a key component to this land use system. Identification of Prime Agricultural lands is based upon several key policies and processes.

3.1 Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides policy direction on matters of Provincial Interest related to land use planning and development. It is a key part of Ontario's policy led planning approach. The Policy Statement provides for appropriate development while protecting resources of provincial interest. One of those resources is Prime Agricultural Lands.

Section 1.1.4 provides policy for Rural Area. In addition to guiding land uses in relation to the management and use of resources, this Section also directs that agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, on-farm diversified uses and normal farm practices to be promoted and protected.

Section 2.3.1 directs that Prime Agricultural Areas shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture. Prime agricultural areas are defined as areas where prime agricultural lands predominate. Prime agricultural areas are defined in the PPS to mean areas of prime agricultural lands and associated Canada Land Inventory (CLI) Class 4 - 7 soils and additional areas where there is a local concentration of farms which exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture. Prime agricultural lands are defined to include specialty crop lands and/or CLI Classes 1, 2 and 3 soils in this order of priority for protection.

Based on this definition, four characteristics are to be considered for the identification of Prime Agricultural Areas. They include:

- Specialty Crops and CLI Class 1, 2 & 3 soils
- evidence of ongoing farming
- absence of incompatible uses or land fragmentation which would limit agricultural activities
- a sufficient area to meet the above criteria and ensure long term agricultural use.

3.2 County Official Plan

The United Counties Official Plan designates large areas as Agricultural Resource Areas.



Section 5.06.3 provides the policy for this designation. Subsection 1 clearly identifies the basis for the determination of Prime Agricultural area. This policy references the Provincial Policy Statement and the Land Evaluation and Area Review Committee which identified the original lands for designation as Agricultural Resource.

This policy expands on the PPS definition by noting that the lands designated Agricultural Resource may also include lands of lesser agricultural capability, woodlands, lands identified as natural heritage features and areas or other lands associated with the designated lands.

3.3 Land Evaluation Area Review

In order to provide a comprehensive and consistent approach for the determination of Prime Agricultural Areas, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food developed a framework for this evaluation called Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR). The purpose of this system is to consider the four factors identified as characteristic of a Prime Agricultural Area in a manner that provides a documented rationale for the designation and encourages local participation in this process.

Several methodologies have been developed which meet the objectives of the LEAR evaluation system. As part of the preparation of the original Official Plan, the United Counties in association with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada prepared a LEAR assessment. The methodology adopted relied upon a scoring system and a computer generated rating system to identify the Agricultural Resource areas. Input to the scoring used by the system and the results of this scoring were reviewed by a LEAR Advisory Committee.

This system successfully identified the pattern of agricultural lands and provided the rationale for the current Agricultural Resource designation. Since this evaluation, the fundamental resource base has not changed. Agriculture has continued to evolve. Also, decisions both public and private have changed the structure and organization of some communities with new growth, infrastructure and investment.

This review builds upon the valuable work that was conducted in the original LEAR and through review and field checks, prepares recommendations for a refinement of those areas originally recommended for designation as Agricultural Resource.

4. COUNTY SOILS MAPPING

The soils in the United Counties were originally mapped individually as follows:

- Stormont County - Report No. 20 (1954)
- Dundas County - Report No. 14 (1952)
- Glengarry County - Report No. 24 (1957).



Despite their age, these reports provide a good general description of the soils and the management practices of the time for improved agricultural production.

We have reviewed these reports as part of the background for this review.

5. CANADA LAND INVENTORY (CLI)

The Canada Land Inventory developed a rating system for Agricultural priority lands which establishes 7 classifications from 1 to 7 with Classes 1, 2 and 3 representing those lands with the least constraints to mechanized tillage and crop production. Classes 4 through 7 have increasing limitations such that Class 7 is non-tillable. Included in this classification system are sub-classes that identify the specific constraints such as fertility, depth of soil and other soil characteristics.

The CLI classification is based on the soils mapping. A review of this mapping was prepared in the 1990's to incorporate new information and soil survey techniques. Because the classification is based on soil types and because there is variation within each soil type, the CLI system provides a very useful overview of the capability but may not be used to rate individual parcels or small areas. This limitation is only important in the evaluation of specific sites. To this end, the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs have issued guidelines for the evaluation of individual parcels. This guideline is published as:
http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/facts/soil_survey.htm.

The CLI mapping was reviewed as part of the background for this review.

6. FIELD CHECKS TO CONFIRM LAND USES

As part of this review, CCS conducted an extensive series of field trips to each area identified for review. These field checks were conducted to provide the following:

- a general overview of farming in the area,
- confirmation of the soil classification, and
- documentation of the presence of non-farm uses and lot sizes.

The selected areas were divided into Townships and the areas in each Township were numbered for reference purposes. The results of the field checks are summarized on the Detailed Site Evaluations which are attached as Appendix B.

7. ANALYSIS

The Analysis consisted of a site by site evaluation of the area to determine if any part of the



area did not qualify as a Prime Agricultural Area. The principle reasons for recommending a change in designation were:

- a logical continuation of an adjacent Rural area due to similar characteristics
- a cluster of non-farm land uses of sufficient size to warrant a change in designation
- a small isolated Agricultural Resource area - generally less than 200 acres
- an area of poor lands of sufficient size to warrant a change in designation generally greater than 200 acres with no farming activity.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The areas outlined on *Figure 2* are proposed for designation to Rural as part of the Official Plan update.

8.2 Include a statement of goals for Agriculture which might include the following:

- protect the agricultural resource base and areas identified as Prime Agricultural Areas
- encourage a sustainable form of agriculture and farming through land use policy and economic development activities
- promote a diverse range of farming activities and agricultural support uses throughout the United Counties
- evaluate the impact of public policies such as the protection of Natural Heritage Areas and Species at Risk on farm practices and explore mechanisms to address inequities
- review/promote local dispute resolution mechanisms for regulations which affect farming practices e.g. nutrient management, source water protection, municipal infrastructure improvements
- recognize agriculture and farming practices as legitimate uses within the rural portion of the United Counties
- add a policy to the Rural areas to provide protection for on-going farming practices in this area. This might include an assessment of the impact of proposed non-farm uses on adjacent agricultural operations. This would be in addition to the MDS provision for livestock operations.

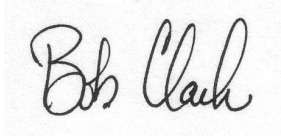
8.3 Recognize that agriculture of a suitable scale is an appropriate use in other designations such as Aggregate Resource and Settlement areas.

8.4 Include a statement to encourage the establishment of agriculturally-related uses in support of farming such as support services, processing, packaging and distribution.

8.5 Ensure that farming and farm production is recognized as a key contributor to the local economy and culture.



Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bob Clark, P.Eng., P.Ag., RPP, MCIP, OLE
Principal Planner

Attachments:

Figure 1 - Location Map

Figure 2 - Recommendations

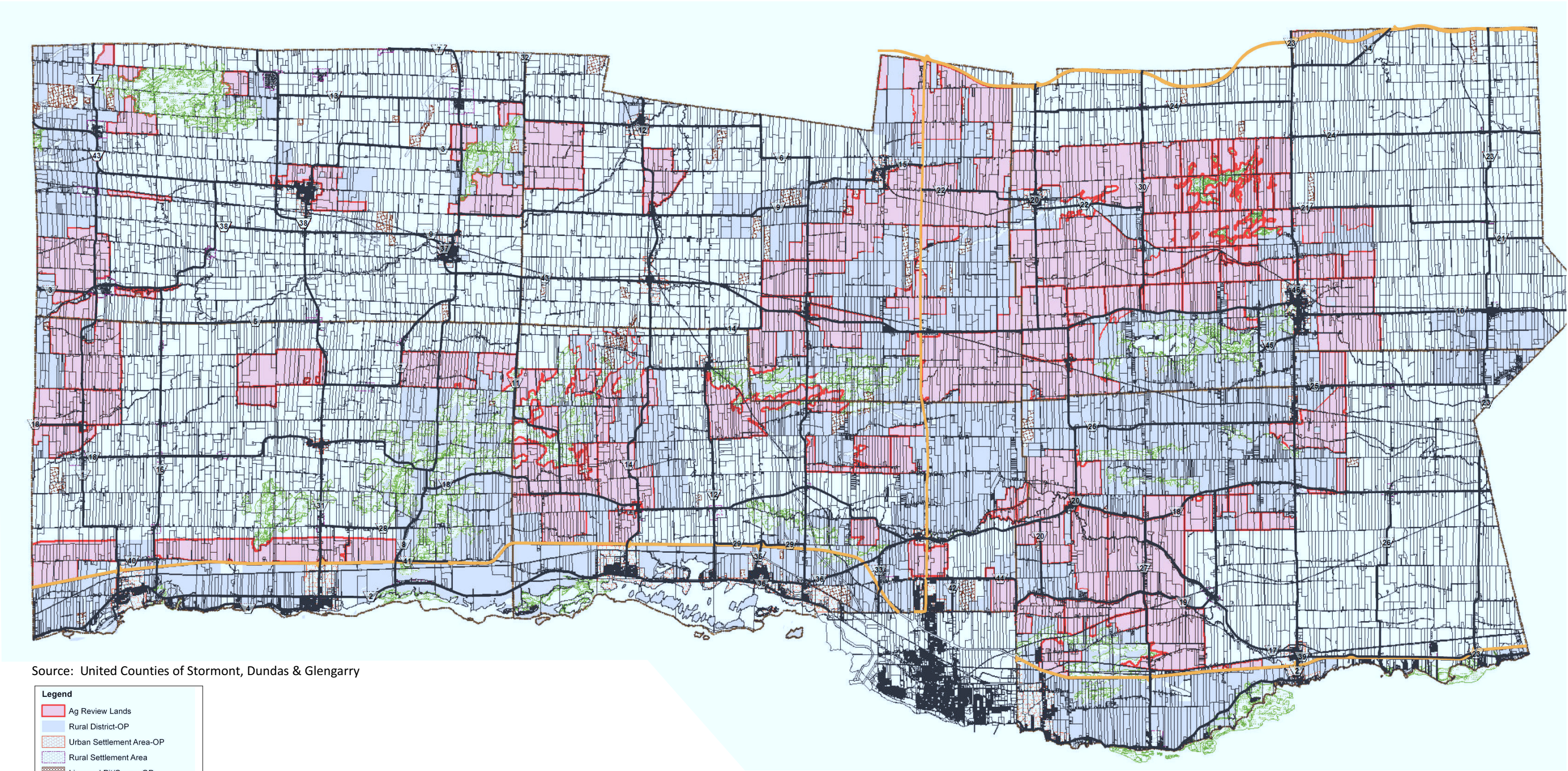
Appendix A: Township Recommendation Maps

Appendix B: Detailed Site Evaluation Sheets

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Figure 1 - Location Map
United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry
Agricultural Resource Lands Review



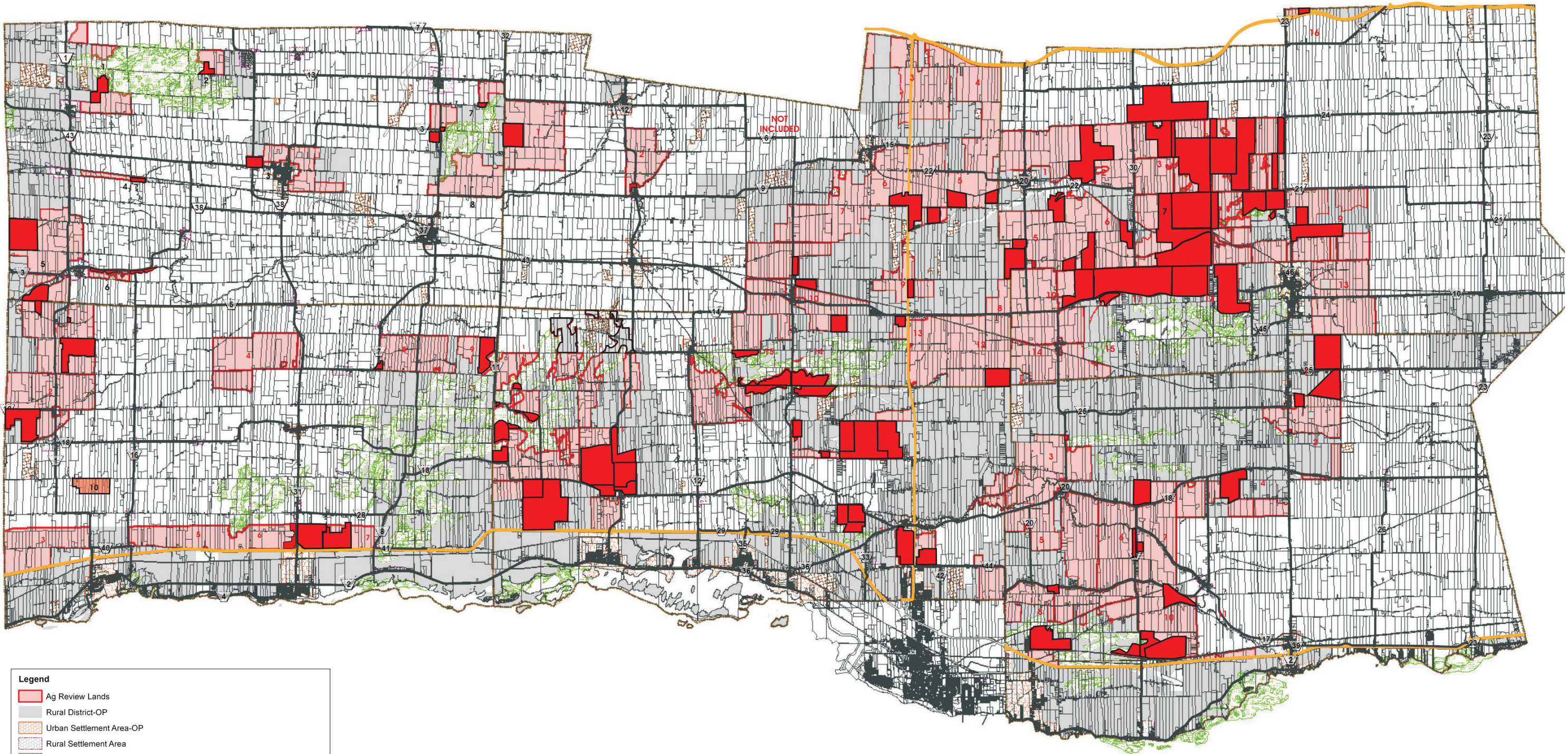
Source: United Counties of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry

Legend

- Ag Review Lands
- Rural District-OP
- Urban Settlement Area-OP
- Rural Settlement Area
- Licensed Pit/Quarry-OP
- Mineral Aggregate Reserve-OP
- Provincially Significant Wetland-OP



Figure 2 - Recommendations
 United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry
 Agricultural Resource Lands Review



Legend

Ag Review Lands

Rural District-OP

Urban Settlement Area-OP

Rural Settlement Area

Licensed Pit/Quarry-OP

Mineral Aggregate Reserve-OP

Provincially Significant Wetland-OP

Agricultural Lands Recommended to Change to Rural

Source: United Counties of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry

