

Sent via Email June 24th, 2025

Subject: Official Plan Amendment No. 27 – Conservation Lands Overlay – Proposed Policies

In June of 2024, County Council approved Official Plan Amendment (OPA) No. 23 which re-designated publicly owned lands to Major Open Space. The intent of OPA No. 23 was to provide further protection of our natural heritage features from potential development. Some properties were appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) based on the premise that lands which contained the Agricultural Resource Lands land use designation were being removed from the prime agricultural areas in SDG Counties. Therefore, a series of discussions were held between MMAH, OMAFA and SDG Counties staff to develop an alternative policy framework which resulted in the creation of a new Conservation Lands overlay.

The intent of Official Plan Amendment No. 27 is to introduce the new Conservation Lands policies that will be reflected as an overlay on the Official Plan Land Use Schedules. This overlay will apply to parcels that are publicly owned in our rural areas. To effectively implement this new overlay approach, staff are proposing to remove, renumber and replace all policies related to the Major Open Space designation in sections of the Official Plan that were approved with OPA No. 23 and replace it with the new Conservation Lands overlay.

Following this, a new subsection will be added and be referred to as section 3.5.2.9 Conservation Lands Overlay. This subsection contains a summary on why the overlay was created and includes specific policies on how it will function when applied to lands that are designated as Agricultural Resource Lands versus other land use designations in our rural areas (e.g. Rural District, Agricultural Resource Lands, Mineral Aggregate Reserve etc.).

The final step involves updating the Official Plan Land Use schedules. This update will identify the properties that were re-designated to Major Open Space with OPA No. 23 and return these lands back to their former land use designation and apply the new Conservation Lands overlay. As a result, the Official Plan policies associated with the underlying land use designation will continue to apply, however, the new policies shall also be considered if any future amendments are proposed. At this time, the Conservation Lands policies will only be applied to publicly owned properties (or planned land acquisitions) that were provided by local municipalities or Conservation Authorities based



on existing or already planned conservation uses. Full details of each step are provided for review below:

Step 1: Remove, Replace and Renumber

Item 1: Delete the following wording from Section 3.5.2.8:

Section 3.5.2.8 ""...Any lands designated as Major Open Space within Rural Areas that contain an underlying Agricultural Resource Lands designation shall also conform to the policies of Section 5.3 of this Official Plan. Permitted uses, development and site alterations on these lands shall be consistent with the Agricultural Policies of the PPS and changes to existing uses must be consistent with Section 2.3.5 and 2.3.6 of the PPS"

Item 2: Remove the Major Open Space designation in Table 3.2 under the Rural Area Designations list and replace it with "Conservation Lands (overlay)".

Item 3: Add "Conservation Land Use (overlay)" to Table 3.5 Designations and Permitted Uses as a designation and under the Permitted Uses column add the following:

- conservation uses,
- forestry uses,
- natural areas.
- passive outdoor recreation uses; and,
- agricultural uses managed by a public authority.

Item 4: Renumber subsection 3.5.2.9 Shoreline Development and Lake Development to subsection 3.5.2.10 Cannabis

Item 5: Renumber subsection 3.5.2.10 Cannabis to subsection 3.5.2.11.

Step 2: Create a new Subsection

Item 1: Remove all Text changes and references to Major Open Space in Rural Areas, associated with OPA No. 23.



Item 2: Add the following new subsection after subsection 3.5.2.8 Open Space, the Natural Environment, and Natural Heritage features:

3.5.2.9 Conservation Lands Overlay

This conservation lands overlay recognizes publicly owned lands, with a history of recreation and conservation uses. These lands are important assets to the County and include the presence of significant woodlots, as identified on Schedule B2 to this plan.

Lands that contain the overlay form part of the larger rural area and will continue to contribute to the overall vibrant rural and agricultural economy, in accordance with the policies of their underlying designation.

The intent of this overlay is to balance conservation objectives with the policies of the underlying designation in a practical planning environment, through for example, environmental stewardship.

The continued conservation of significant natural heritage features on these lands shall be undertaken in accordance with the policies of this plan, while respecting the primary use and policies of the underlying designation, in particular, lands for agriculture.

- 1) On lands designated Agricultural Resource Lands, the policies of Section 5.3 continue to apply, in addition:
 - a) The following existing uses are permitted;
 - i. Conservation uses; and,
 - ii. Passive outdoor recreation uses excluding buildings and golf courses.
 - b) Expansions of existing uses identified in subsection a) may be considered based on the policies of this plan and the relevant provisions of the Planning Act.
 - c) An evaluation of new non-agricultural uses shall be consistent with the policies in Section 5.3 Agricultural Resource Lands.
- 2) Notwithstanding the policies in Section 3.4.6 of this plan, permitted uses on lands in which the Conservation Lands overlay applies that are designated as Rural District are



limited to conservation uses, forestry uses, natural areas and agricultural uses managed by a public authority.

- a) Lot creation and additional uses shall require an amendment to this plan. Minor boundary adjustments (e.g. rectify encroachment, legal or technical reasons, and severing two or more lots that unintentionally merged on title etc.) may be permitted subject to the review and acceptance by SDG Counties' approval authority.
- 3) If a local Council or public body is considering the disposition of these publicly owned lands, they are encouraged to undertake conservation easements with any potential new owner to ensure the long-term protection of on-site significant natural heritage resources, including significant woodlots.
- 4) Where possible, collaboration is encouraged between public bodies, agricultural organizations, environmental organizations, and agricultural property owners to implement best management practices to align conservation measures with agricultural activities. This may include the identification of wildlife corridors across agricultural fields, and habitat restored within them, where this is suitable for the public body and/or private landowner.
- 5) Any proposal to remove the Conservation Lands (overlay) for development purposes will require an amendment to this plan.

Step 3: Update Official Plan Land Use Schedules

Item 1: Redesignate all lands that are designated as Major Open Space in Rural Areas to their former land use designation established, prior to, the adoption of By-law No. 5451 (OPA No. 23); and, apply the Conservation Lands (overlay) identified in Schedules A, B, D, E and F, associated with By-law No. XXXX located in the Rural Areas.

Item 2:

Change Schedule A1 – A6 to identify the subject lands as "Conservation Lands
Overlay", including changes to the associated legends to add the new overlay



 Change Schedule A1 – A6 to identify the publicly owned lands located in the Rural Areas and apply the Conservation Lands (overlay) and maintain the previous land use designations.

Attachments:

- OPA No. 27 Conservation Lands SDG Counties
 - Schedule A Township of North Dundas
 - Schedule B Municipality of South Dundas
 - o Schedule C Township of North Stormont
 - o Schedule D Township of South Stormont
 - Schedule E Township of North Glengarry
 - o Schedule F Township of South Glengarry













