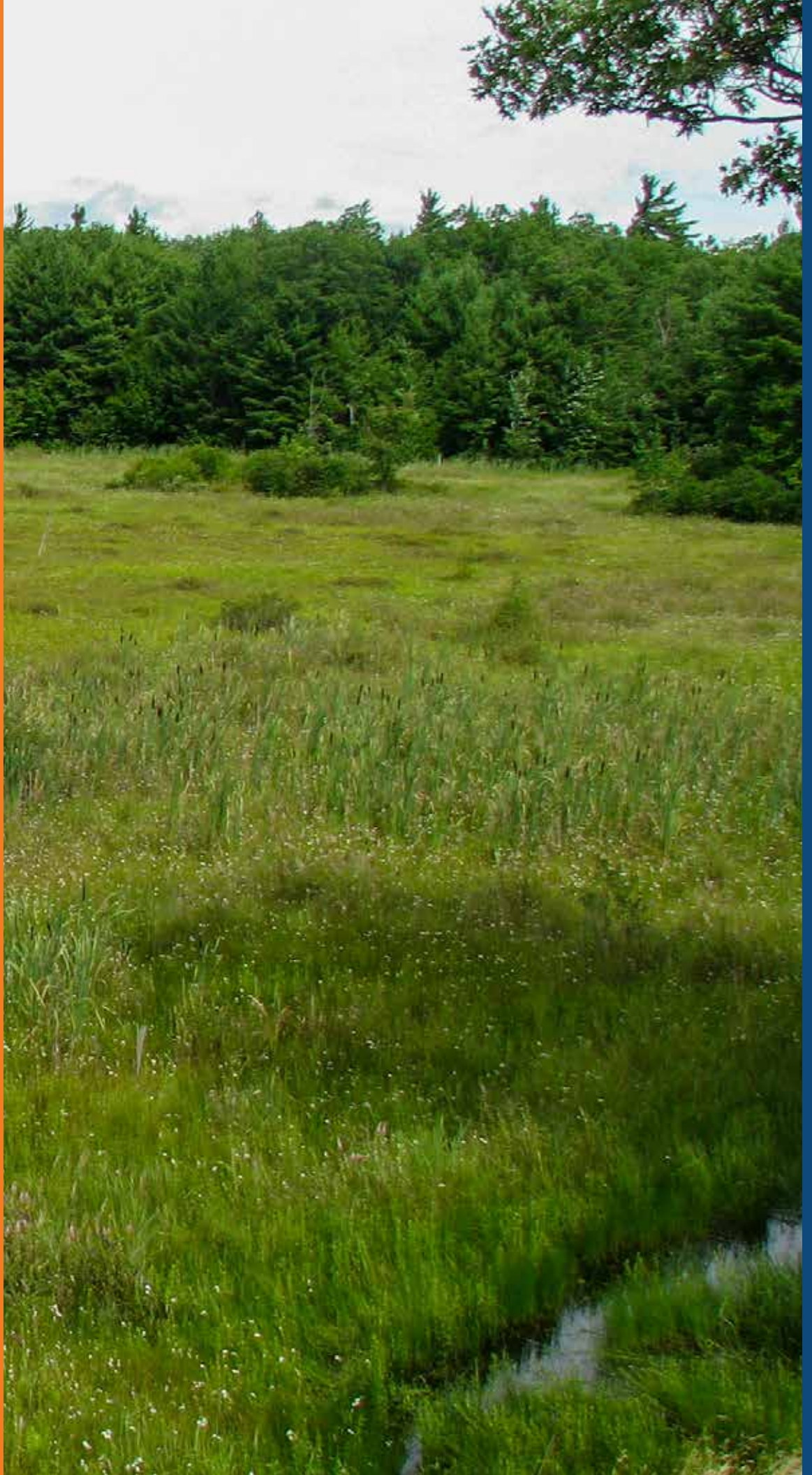




Quinte
CONSERVATION

CONSERVATION LANDS STRATEGY 2023





Preface

The intent of this document is to fulfill the requirements of Ontario Regulation 686/21 under the Conservation Authorities Act, which requires Ontario's Conservation Authorities to describe the management objectives of their land holdings.

The following report is focused on the properties owned and managed by Quinte Conservation. Further, the attached mapping broadly indicates the categories of land use. This report acts as a guide for Quinte Conservation staff to manage its vast land holdings and provide clarity to the public on its roles and responsibilities.

At a minimum, this report should be reviewed for relevance every five years.

Introduction

The ecological condition of the Quinte Conservation's property holdings has been greatly affected by the last 200 years of land use. Deeply rooted in the pioneer settlement era, forested areas were extensively and repeatedly over harvested, resulting in grazing and fires in the northern portion of the watershed, and the clearing of land for agriculture in the southern portion. These activities greatly reduced the watershed's forest cover and caused massive soil erosion and downstream flooding.

It was from these conditions that Conservation Authorities were established with a broad mandate to implement conservation measures.

The Conservation Authorities Act was introduced in 1946 and enabled programs and services that furthered watershed-based conservation, restoration, development, and management of natural resources in Ontario. Under the Act, Conservation Authorities were created at the request of local municipalities through shared funding from the province.

The purchase of private, patented land, which was environmentally degraded and often referred to as a 'barren wasteland' by Conservation Authorities, represented a long-term partnership between the province and its municipalities.

Most of the 12,000 hectares (or 30,000 acres) of vacant property owned by Quinte Conservation was purchased with provincial support before 1975. This acquisition of land removed the potential for commercial exploitation, thus assisted in preventing flooding, erosion, drought, and deforestation.

Over the past 40 years, these land holdings have naturalized, and now protect lands on a permanent watercourse (creek, river, or lake) and demonstrate the benefits of protecting fragile lands from economic exploitation.

The land holdings operate for a variety of activities including water management (weirs and dams), conservation areas (recreational use), commercial forestry (good forest management practices), and conservation reserves (providing ecosystem services to the watershed). Often, several of these uses overlap on a single land holding, therefore representing an integrated approach to management.

Guiding Principles

Quinte Conservation's land holdings form a stable ownership; with its land use based on the best available conservation strategy of the day. In order to continue providing ecosystem goods and services to watershed residents, the individual properties will be managed in accordance with the following general statements:

- Protect, maintain and, where possible, restore biodiversity, geological, and natural heritage features including species at risk, managed wildlife populations, and generalist species and their requisite habitats. This will assist in overall ecosystem stability during expected climate change of years to come.
- Maintain safe, compatible, multi-use natural areas by providing outdoor recreational pursuits such as bird watching, picnicking, hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, canoeing, photography, nature appreciation and hunting.
- Support demonstration activities of sustainable land uses, including good forest management practices and wetland management projects, and providing sites for research activities and other ecosystem restoration techniques.
- Provide spaces to public and private school groups, and community-based groups for activities related to natural resource management.
- Where appropriate, support the sustainable management of fish and wildlife by allowing public access for licensed fishing and hunting activities.
- Provide local employment opportunities through sustainable forest management practices at appropriate properties.
- Property holdings may assist in providing a source of revenue to fulfill the objectives of Quinte Conservation through lease agreements, provided that the use does not conflict with the objectives of natural resource conservation.
- Document the existing natural heritage and cultural features found on its land holdings and provide appropriate protection measures.
- Document Quinte Conservation activities in an attempt to provide a record of land use for future study.



Objectives

By maintaining the land cover in a natural state, Quinte Conservation properties will protect vegetation and erodible soils. This will assist in protecting natural heritage and biodiversity values, while providing compatible natural resource management opportunities for the long-term interest of the public.

As such, the priority for objectives continues to be as follows (from highest to lowest priority):

Environmental Protection

The management of forest cover and wetlands will help retain water on the landscape, increasing recharge and slowing run-off while slowing erosive forces. Further, wildlife habitat and protection of sensitive natural areas assists in providing recreational activities for the public.

Recreation and Education

Conservation Areas provide public access to large sections of natural cover and to permanent waterbodies. These areas will be maintained for routine use by establishing entrance areas and trail systems. These areas will assist with educating the public on the perils of exploitative land uses and their long-lasting affects on the watershed.

Wood Products and Income

The production of forest products (commercial forest harvest) will demonstrate state-of-the-art science while maintaining forest health and providing local employment opportunities. Income generated from the sale of standing timber, carbon offsets and hunting leases will be utilized for municipal property taxes, access improvements, and boundary management including legal surveys, signage, fencing, etc.



Land Use Categories

In order to assist in sorting such a large and diverse holding, broad categories and activities of existing uses have been developed. Each of the land use categories have a clear and direct association to the cultivation of a land ethic for the general public.

Conservation Areas and Water Control Structure Properties

Quinte Conservation maintains 12 conservation areas which are open daily from sunrise to sunset for public recreational use. Recommended activities include:

» **Hiking**

- Cross-country skiing
- Dog walking
- Snow shoeing
- Walking

» **Boat Launching**

- Fishing boats
- Kayaking
- Other small craft launching

» **Camping** (offered at Depot Lakes Conservation Area)

- Seasonal sites for trailers
- Interior/back-country boat-in only sites

» **Passive Activities**

- Bird watching
- Group activities
- Nature and portrait photography
- Picnicking

Conservation Reserves

(not to be confused with crown land terminology)

As these properties range from barely accessed to those with managed municipal road frontage, the properties are generally maintained in a natural state in order to provide long-term ecological stability to the watershed. Although not widely advertised, these properties provide access for outdoor recreational pursuits, including hiking, wildlife viewing, and recreational hunting/fishing. In order to reduce conflicts and generate revenue to pay for municipal property taxes, hunting activities are regulated under a lease agreement with Quinte Conservation.

Commercial Forests

Of the 30,000 acres of property owned by Quinte Conservation, only 4,000 acres have been identified as priorities for commercial forest harvesting. These property holdings have economic concentrations of plantation forest and natural stands of commercially viable species composition. Furthermore, these blocks are geographically centred close to Provincial Highways with access to municipally maintained roads - making transportation of raw material to mills efficient, thus utilizing the services available in nearby towns for fuel, equipment repair, casual labour, food, and accommodations.

Existing landings with stockpiled logs and forest access with trails have been created by past forest thinning activities. By targeting commercial forest activities onto these properties, staff time (conducting inventories, liability/risk analysis, developing harvest agreements, confirming insurance, resolving property boundary discrepancies and harvest monitoring) can be focused on the areas with the greatest income returns.



Programs and Services on Quinte Conservation Lands

Public Education

Several of Quinte Conservation properties are the focus for the development of education facilities, structures, interpretive signage, and scientific instrumentation demonstration by other groups and agencies. Primary examples include the Frink Outdoor Education Centre - which is operated by two local school boards, O'Hara Mill Homestead - which is operated by volunteers who demonstrate the local pioneer lifestyle circa 1800s, and Sheffield Conservation Area - which sparks an interest in astronomy at the Dark Skies Viewing Deck which is operated by the County of Lennox and Addington.

Demonstration

Properties with this overlapping category represent areas that will be utilized for public demonstration of restoration techniques including forest, savanna and wetland enhancement efforts which contribute to ecosystem restoration.

Hunting Leases

The hunting of provincially regulated large game species on Quinte Conservation lands is controlled by a lease program. The two main objectives are to assist with recouping a portion of the property taxes being paid by Quinte Conservation for its holdings, and to provide a level of control over access to the property.

Depot Lakes Campground

Depot Lakes Conservation Area offers both a seasonal trailer campground and an interior/back-country camping experience with boat-in-only sites at Second Lake. The trailer sites are rented seasonally by Quinte Conservation from May to September, while the interior/back-country sites are rented by the week. The revenue from these rentals are utilized to maintain conservation area infrastructure and staffing.

Note: Depot Lakes Campground is the only activity Quinte Conservation actively supervises.



Land Use Policies - All Property Holdings

General Activity

- Changes in land use policy or major incidents will be reported to the Quinte Conservation Executive Board by staff annually at a minimum.
- Commercial use of Quinte Conservation property will be discouraged.
- Commercial power generation development will be limited to waterpower on water control structure properties only.
- Other types of commercial power generation, namely wind and solar, will not be allowed.
- Whenever necessary, Quinte Conservation will consult with professionals and employ local contractors in order to maintain the integrity of the land holding.
- Littering, dumping or placement of unauthorized signs is prohibited on all Quinte Conservation property.
- Overnight camping is not allowed on any property (with the exception of Depot Lakes Conservation Area, which charges a fee for camping on regulated interior and seasonal camping sites).
- All Quinte Conservation properties are open to appropriate research activities relating to natural resource conservation with appropriate restrictions outlined in a property use agreement.
- Quinte Conservation will not formalize permanent access across its property holdings in the interest of the private landowners. Temporary or seasonal access to adjacent Crown lands may be considered with conditions.
- Any infringement on the use of Quinte Conservation lands will be resolved by contacting the appropriate police and/or conservation officers for the subject area. Further, Quinte Conservation will retain the right to terminate any property lease (if applicable). If necessary, the unauthorized removal of forest products from Quinte Conservation lands will involve recuperating the monetary value of the estimated timber volumes by legal means.
- The mapping and control of invasive species is a priority on Quinte Conservation lands as opportunities, funding and new science becomes available.

» **Horseback Riding**

- Guided horseback riding (as a commercial venture) is not allowed.
- Horseback riding occurs on many of the Quinte Conservation's vacant properties and is allowed provided no new trails are established for this use.
- Vanderwater Conservation Area is the only Conservation Area where horseback riding is allowed due to the historic use of the property for this activity.

General Activity continued

» *Collection/Disposal of Natural Items*

- Aggregate extraction will not be permitted on Quinte Conservation property. Should funding become available for the rehabilitation of former aggregate pits, proposals to do so should be considered. This includes changes to the slope and seeding to encourage bank stabilization.
- Prospecting, exploration activities, and disposition of mining rights is not allowed.
- Fuelwood harvest is not allowed on Quinte Conservation property, including the removal of treetops remaining from forest harvest operations.
- Littering, dumping or disposal of any foreign material, cutting, pruning, digging or gathering of trees, shrubs and/or groundcover are prohibited on all Quinte Conservation property.
- When maintaining vegetation within Ontario Hydro corridors which cross Quinte Conservation lands, staff will request that no herbicide spray is used, that brush is loped and scattered (rather than chipped), and that any heavy equipment is utilized only when necessary for the safety of their staff.

» *Hunting/Trapping/Fishing*

Many of the vacant land holdings of Quinte Conservation are leased for exclusive hunting rights from the beginning of September through to the end of December annually. Currently, the lease period is for a three-year term. Once this term expires, current lease holders are given first right of refusal, followed by adjacent property owners, and then those on the waiting list.

NOTE: Outside of the Sept-Dec timeframe, all Quinte Conservation vacant land parcels are open to the general public for regulated hunting purposes. Hunting is strictly prohibited on any Conservation Area property.



- Commercial activities like guiding for hunting/fishing, bait fish collection and fur harvesting are not allowed.
- Management of beaver activities (through trapping of nuisance animals) may be necessary in order to reduce damage to adjacent landowners and municipal infrastructure (roads).
- Hunting of regulated wildlife is allowed only on commercial forest and conservation reserve properties and is subject to Federal and/or Provincial regulations. Further, Quinte Conservation authorizes hunting leases (for which a fee is collected) specifically for the large game seasons of White Tailed Deer, Moose, Elk, and Black Bear on many properties. Hunting is not permitted on Conservation Area and/or water management structure properties.
- Only portable hunting stands and blinds are permitted during legal hunting seasons and must be removed at the end of the hunting lease.
- Licensed fishing activities are allowed provided they follow Provincial regulations and are not endangering other users of the property (i.e. fishing should not occur where swimmers congregate).
- Adjacent landowners will be given the first right to lease the property for the large game hunting lease program. If not interested, either a waiting list or advertisement will be pursued in order to lease the property.
- Baiting of Black Bears is not allowed.
- Hunting with dogs is permitted by Hunting Lease Holders only.
- Fishing is allowed on Quinte Conservation property subject to Provincial regulations. Bait fish harvesting will be permitted for personal use only (not commercial collection).



Conservation Area and Water Management Structure Specific

- Conservation areas are open daily from sunrise to sunset for public use.
- Visitors to these areas should be encouraged to 'take only pictures and leave only footprints' during their stay.
- Garbage collection facilities shall not be provided. Visitors should be prepared to take their garbage with them.
- Any special event that will require the closure of the area to the general public shall require a 'Property Use Agreement' and monetary charge (as determined on a case-by-case basis).
- Weddings or special events (such as family reunion picnics or photography sessions) will be allowed at no charge, provided that all of the rules of the conservation area are followed and under the understanding that the activity will not restrict the normal usage for other visitors.
- Motorboat sports (water skiing, tubing, racing, etc.) are not allowed on Quinte Conservation controlled lakes (Mellon Lake at Sheffield and 2nd/3rd Lakes at the Depot Lakes).
- Dogs are required to be on a leash at all times while visiting a conservation area. 'Stoop and scoop' will be required for visiting pets.

Conservation Area Prohibited Activities

- Open fires
- Discharge of firearms, and all hunting and/or trapping activities
- Alcohol consumption
- Target practice and paintball games
- Trailer or tent camping in undesignated areas
- Riding any type of motorized vehicle
- Off-leash pets
- Unsanctioned creation of new trails and/or structures for mountain bikes
- Public nudity and indecent acts

Conservation Area Reserve Specific

- Species at risk records, reports, and inventories shall be compiled by Quinte Conservation staff for each property as they are encountered.
- Stewardship activities that improve wildlife habitat, restore degraded areas, or manage habitat for sensitive species will be encouraged.
- Staff activities such as plantation thinning and planting of appropriate native species in the understory will be encouraged.
- Management of wetland habitat in partnership with non-government groups (e.g. Ducks Unlimited Canada) are encouraged.



Commercial Forest Specific

Commercial forests have been designated based on several factors like: concentrations of plantation forest, ease of access, and proximity to the Provincial Highway network. Through forest certification, an approximate 10 year forest harvest operation schedule has been developed. Following the scheduled plantation thinning regime encourages the re-growth of natural forest in the understory (plantations were established in abandoned agricultural fields). Neighbouring property owners are contacted in order to clarify any concerns (like property boundaries). Each forest stand of interest is inventoried (i.e. re-measured) and a prescription is developed by a Professional Forester. Subsequently, trees are marked for removal (with reference to the prescription) by certified tree marking technicians. Harvest contacts are developed and signed with a forest harvest contractor. The harvest contractor is made aware of any on site limitations (like areas difficult to access or areas of natural sensitivity), and staff routinely monitor the work for compliance.

- The commercial forest blocks will serve as encouragement and support for private landowners and the forest industry by providing an example of good forestry practices and wise forest stewardship.
- All forest management activities will be managed in a sustainable manner for the benefit of present and future generations.
- All harvests will be practiced in a manner that is environmentally sustainable, and encourages natural succession of native species, improves wildlife habitat and/or addresses forest health concerns.
- Quinte Conservation is committed to documenting forest harvest activities and major insect or disturbance events (wind or flooding) for future forest managers.
- Maintenance of existing roads, access routes and trails will be performed while maintaining the ecological integrity of the property.
- Quinte Conservation staff will only consider new road and/or trail development through further detailed planning which strives to avoid sensitive natural areas.
- Cultural heritage sites associated with past human activities, endeavours, or events (including surface artifacts, subsurface strata of human origin or incorporating cultural deposits, remains of structural features, or a combination of these attributes) shall be protected from disturbance wherever possible.
- Identified species at risk and their habitat should be mapped and protected from possible disruption by other land uses wherever possible.

Note: Quinte Conservation is committed to working with partners to allow access to all properties for the purpose of natural heritage inventories.

Acquisition and Disposition Policy

The long-term objective of retiring fragile lands from exploitation has greatly assisted with stabilizing the watershed ecosystem, provided the public with recreational opportunities, and contributed to the protection of ecologically sensitive areas. Limited commercial forest harvest activities provide local employment opportunities and demonstrate high standards of management.

Any new acquisition or disposition of property should be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Executive Board through the provision of a staff report and recommendation.

Acquisitions

The acquisition of property represents a one-time capital expense and a relatively low overhead for management as property taxes, insurance and staffing are already needed for the existing holding. By targeting new purchases and/or donations to priority areas, the values associated with the existing land holding will be enhanced over time. The acquisition of property is of interest to Quinte Conservation when there is no net burden placed on Quinte Conservation's finances. As such, Quinte Conservation will seek the donation of vacant property as its primary means of increasing its landholding. With any donation of property, Quinte Conservation will cover all costs associated with the transaction once reviewed and approved by the Executive Board. This may include the cost of a legal survey, appraisal for a charitable donation receipt, any land transfer taxes, as well as legal fees for both parties.

As such, the priority for property acquisitions will be as follows (from highest to lowest priority):

- Vacant land parcels of any size that are adjacent to properties already owned by Quinte Conservation.
- Parcels which have frontage on a permanent waterbody (e.g. creek, river or lake).
- Properties with significant natural features (e.g. large wetland(s), areas of natural scientific interest, deer wintering yards, headwater of wetlands, watercourses with groundwater springs, uncommon geological features such as karst or cliffs, those that fill voids within natural corridors, or properties designated by Municipalities as ecologically sensitive).
- Parcels which are adjacent to another public body or non-government organization's holding which is intended to be managed for the protection of natural values over the long term (e.g. Municipal Park, Provincial Park or Land Trust nature reserve).
- Vacant land which is large enough to support the objectives of Quinte Conservation land ownership; generally being parcels which retain natural cover and are at least 40 acres (or 16 hectares) in area.



Dispositions

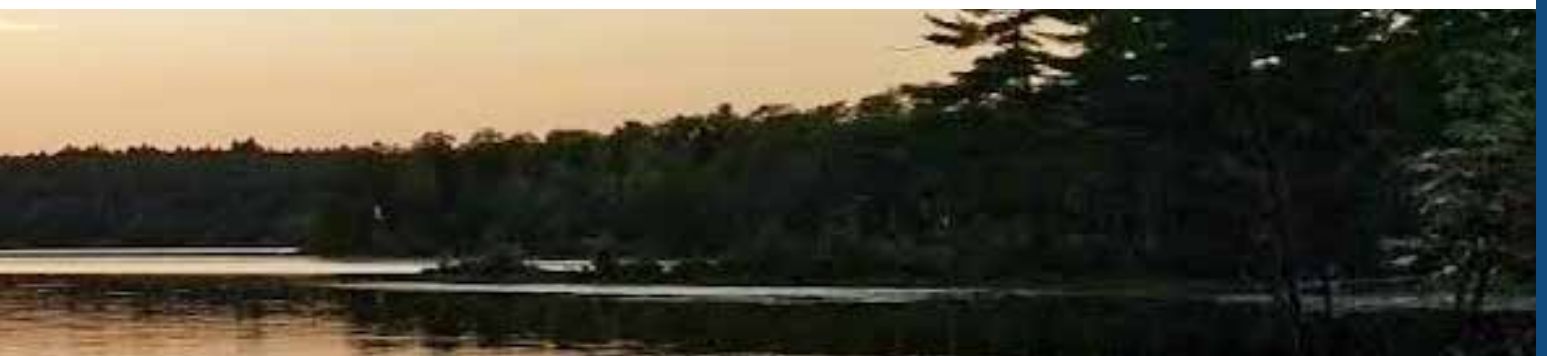
Dispositions (transfer/sale/right-of-way/easement) to a public body (e.g. a public agency, member Municipality, or Crown) will be considered by staff subject to the goals and objectives for Quinte Conservation property and/or an appropriate land tenure agreement, if required.

A disposition to the general public will go through a public tender process. The cost of the disposition should be borne by the proponent, and not inflict a financial burden on Quinte Conservation. Any funds provided by a disposition should be allocated toward property management activities including further acquisition, inventories, stewardship demonstrations, boundary surveys, signage, or other such activities.

Generally, the disposal of land is discouraged unless there are outstanding circumstances which would allow for a net gain by Quinte Conservation. Any cost of the disposition (including lease agreements) should be borne by the proponent and not inflict a financial burden on Quinte Conservation. Typically, any disposition requires an appraisal of the value, a legal survey and public notification including the Crown. Any funds provided by a disposition should be allocated toward property management activities including further property acquisition, inventories, stewardship demonstrations, boundary surveys, signage, or other such activities on the existing land holding.

As such, the priority for property dispositions will be as follows (from highest to lowest priority):

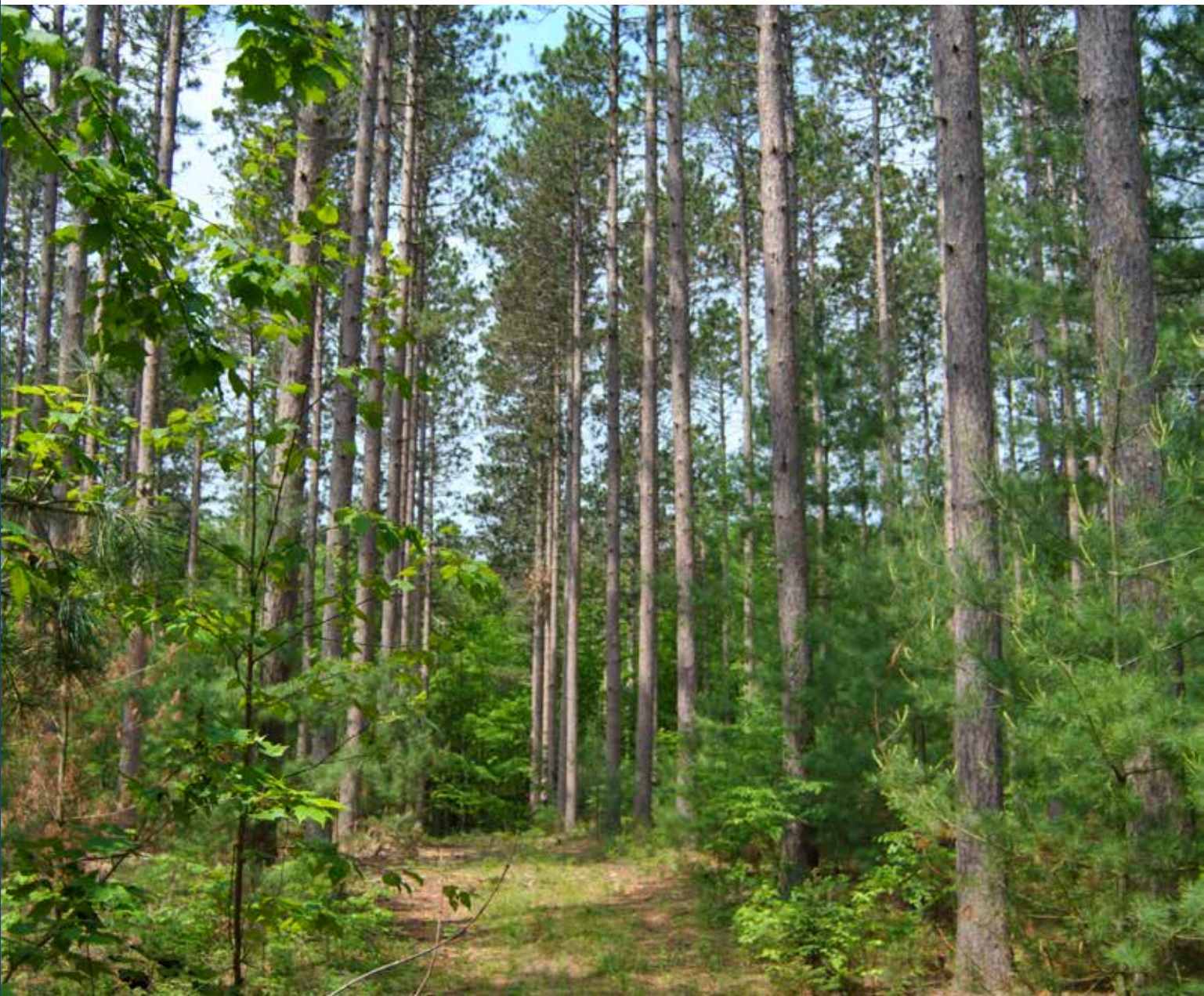
- Easements or rights-of-way over Quinte Conservation property in the interest of a Municipality.
- Properties which are utilized as local area parks and are managed by the local Municipality (e.g. the Kingsford, Forest Mills, Colebrook, Newburgh, Camden East, Harry Smith, Allisonville, Bloomfield Mill Pond, Milford Mill Pond, Demorestville, Sunset Lookout, Riverside Park and Whytock Park).
- Parcels that are not eligible for inclusion within the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program or Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program due to small area size or lack of ecologically sensitive features.
- A disposition which involves an easement or right-of-way over Quinte Conservation property in the interest of a private property owner.



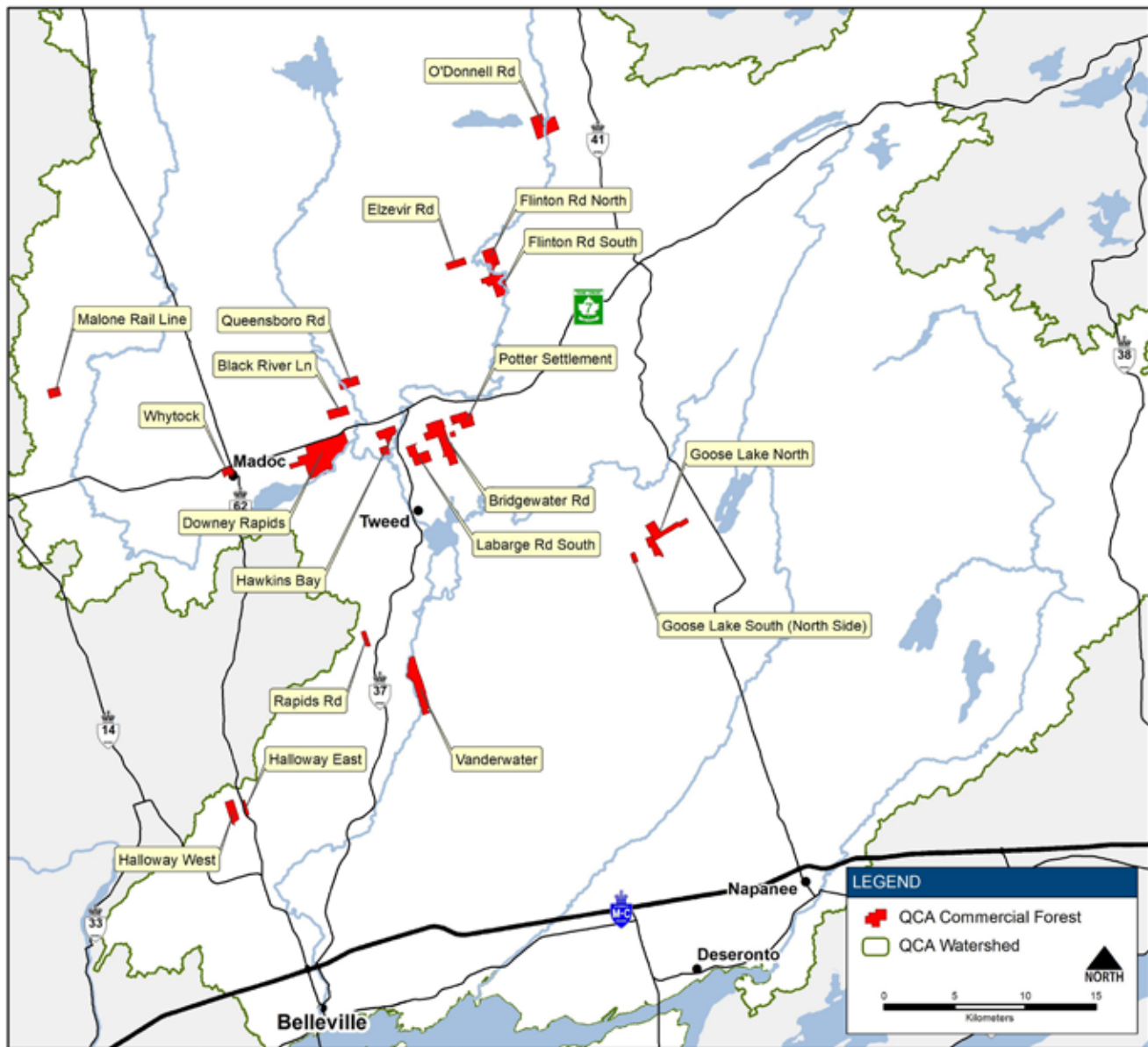
Maps

The following maps indicate Quinte Conservation's land inventory. Each map represents one of the categories mentioned under the Property Land Use section of this report and are as follows:

- Commercial Forests
- Conservation Areas
- Conservation Reserves (North)
- Conservation Reserves (South)
- Educational Properties
- Water Management Structures
- Master Map

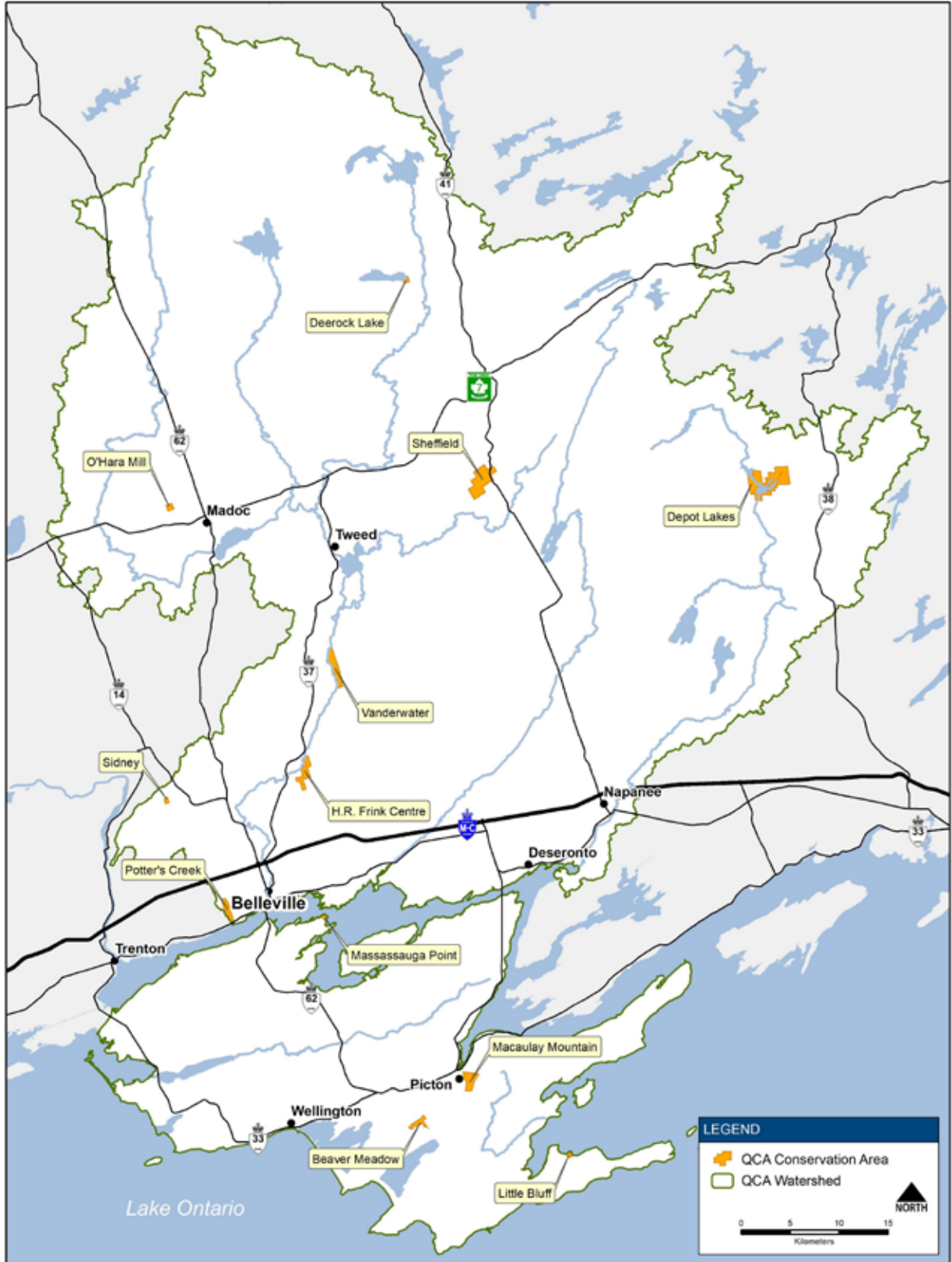


Commercial Forests



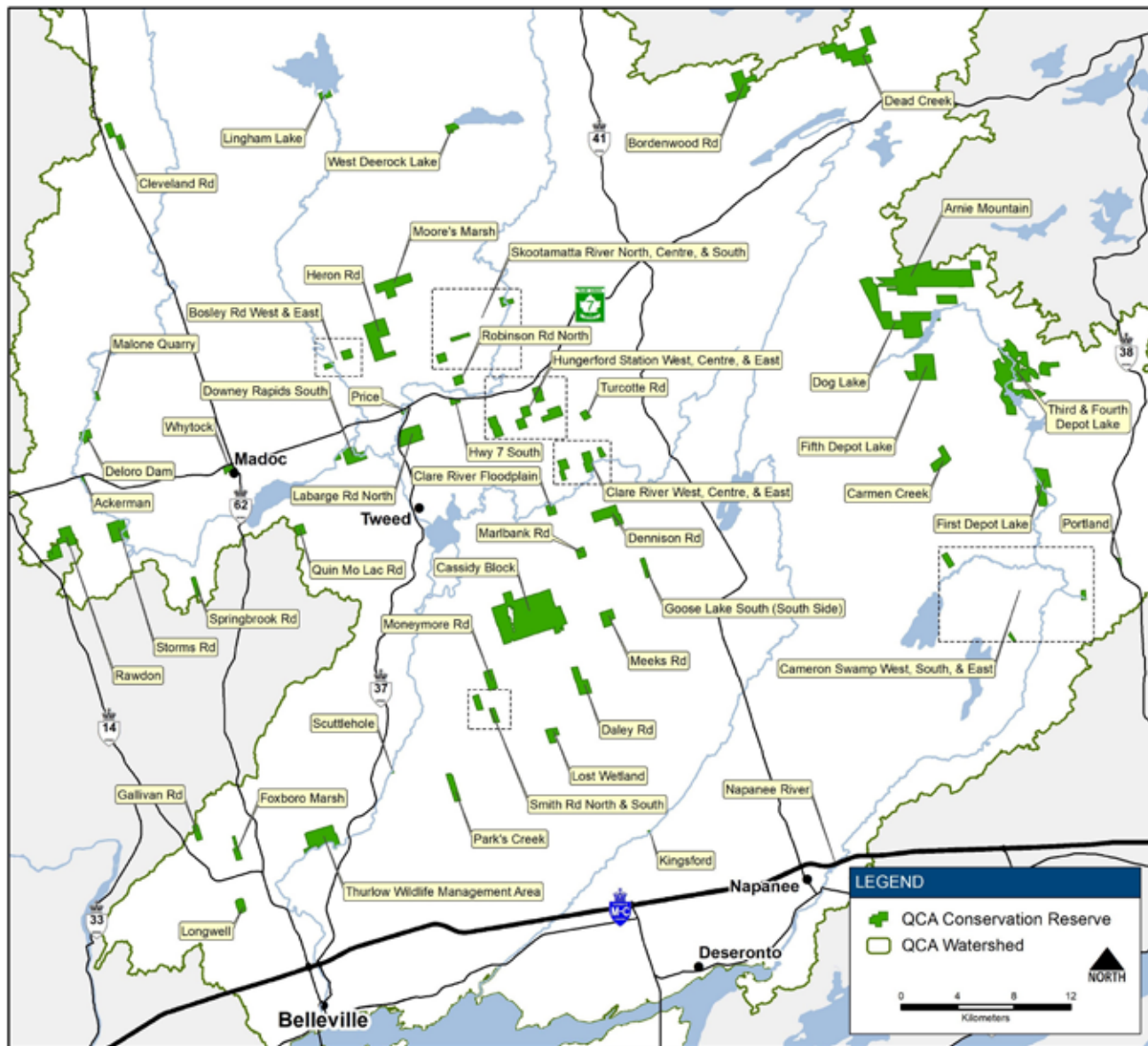
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Conservation Areas



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Conservation Reserves (North)



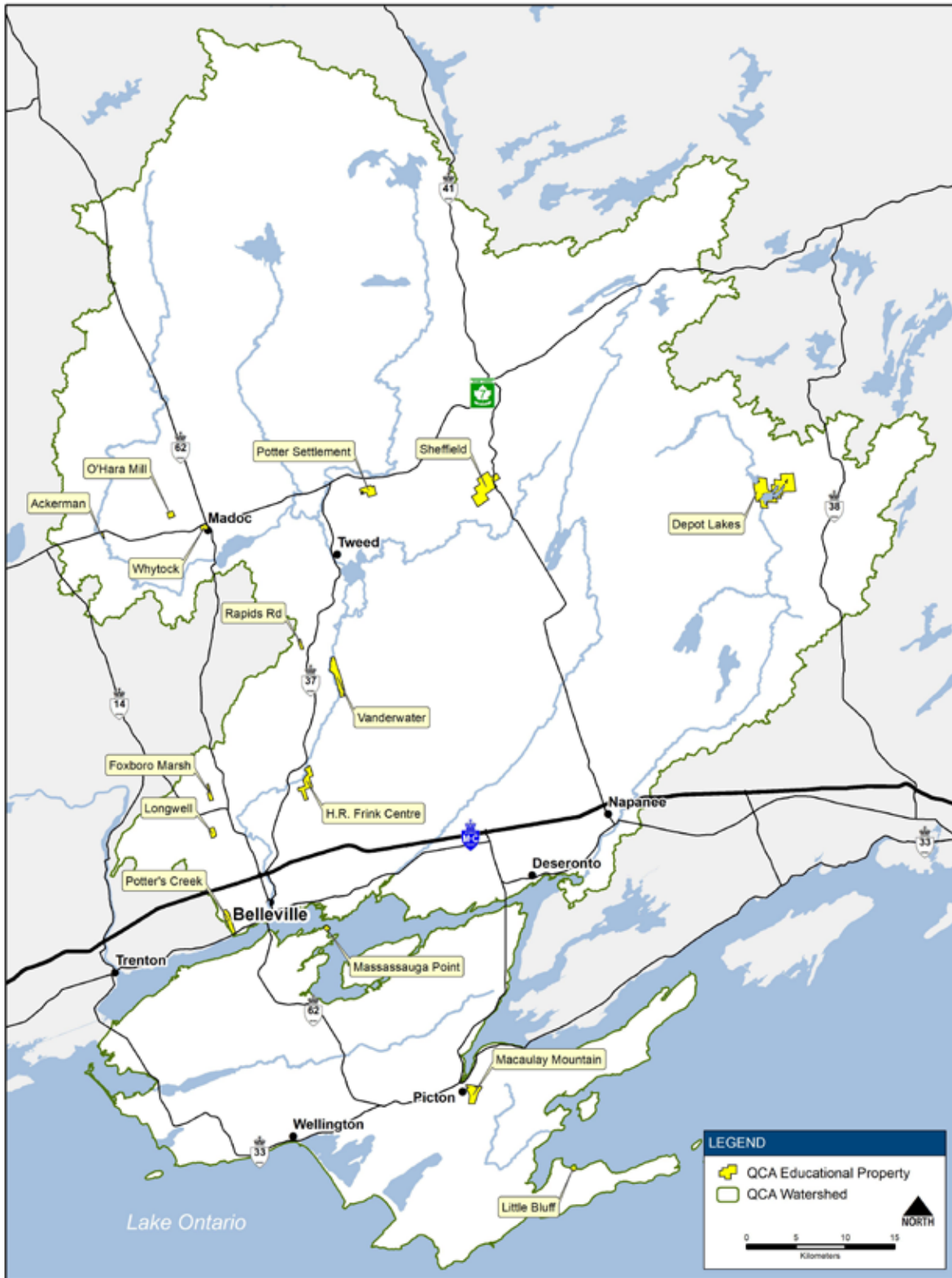
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Conservation Reserves (South)

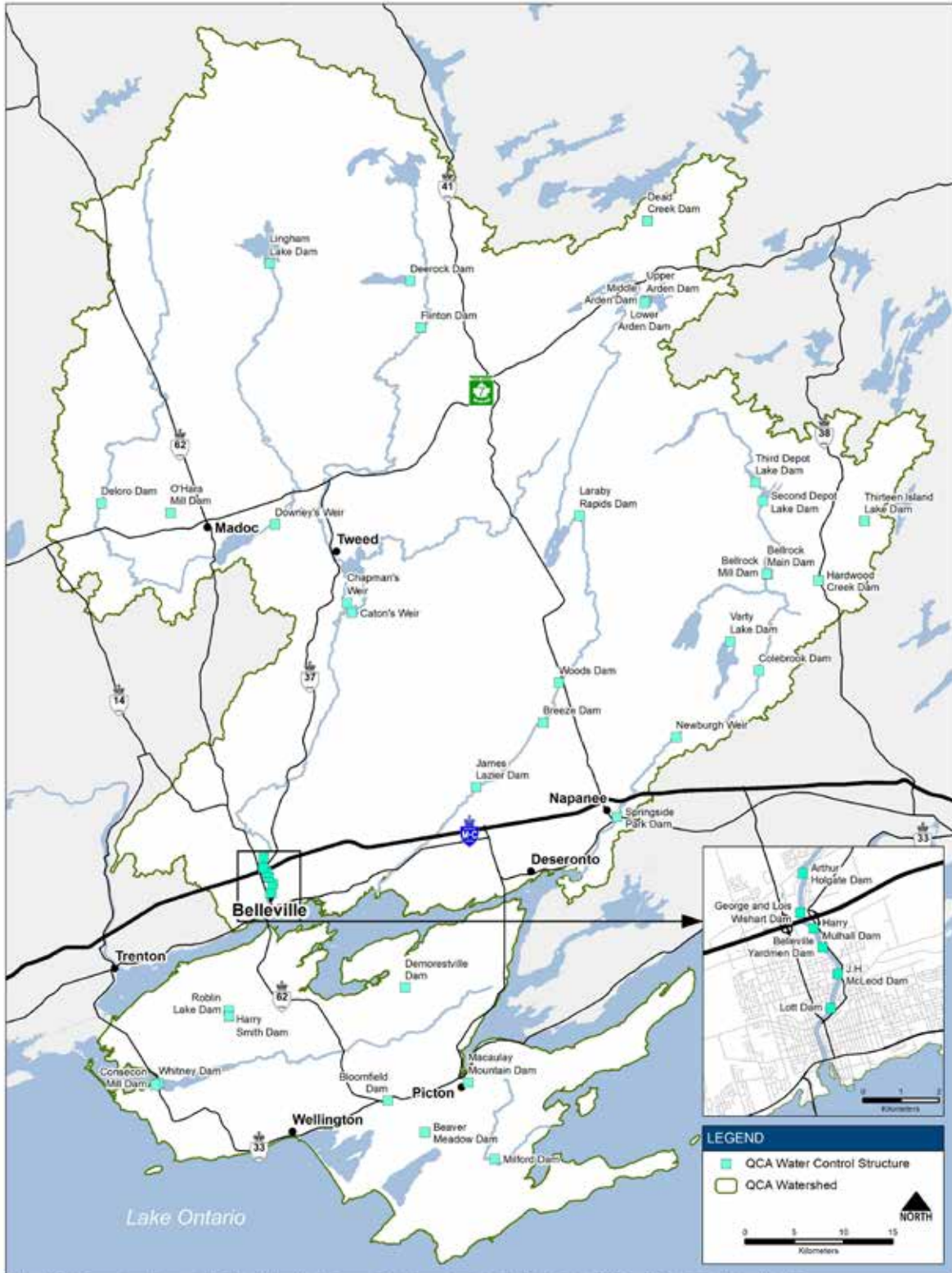


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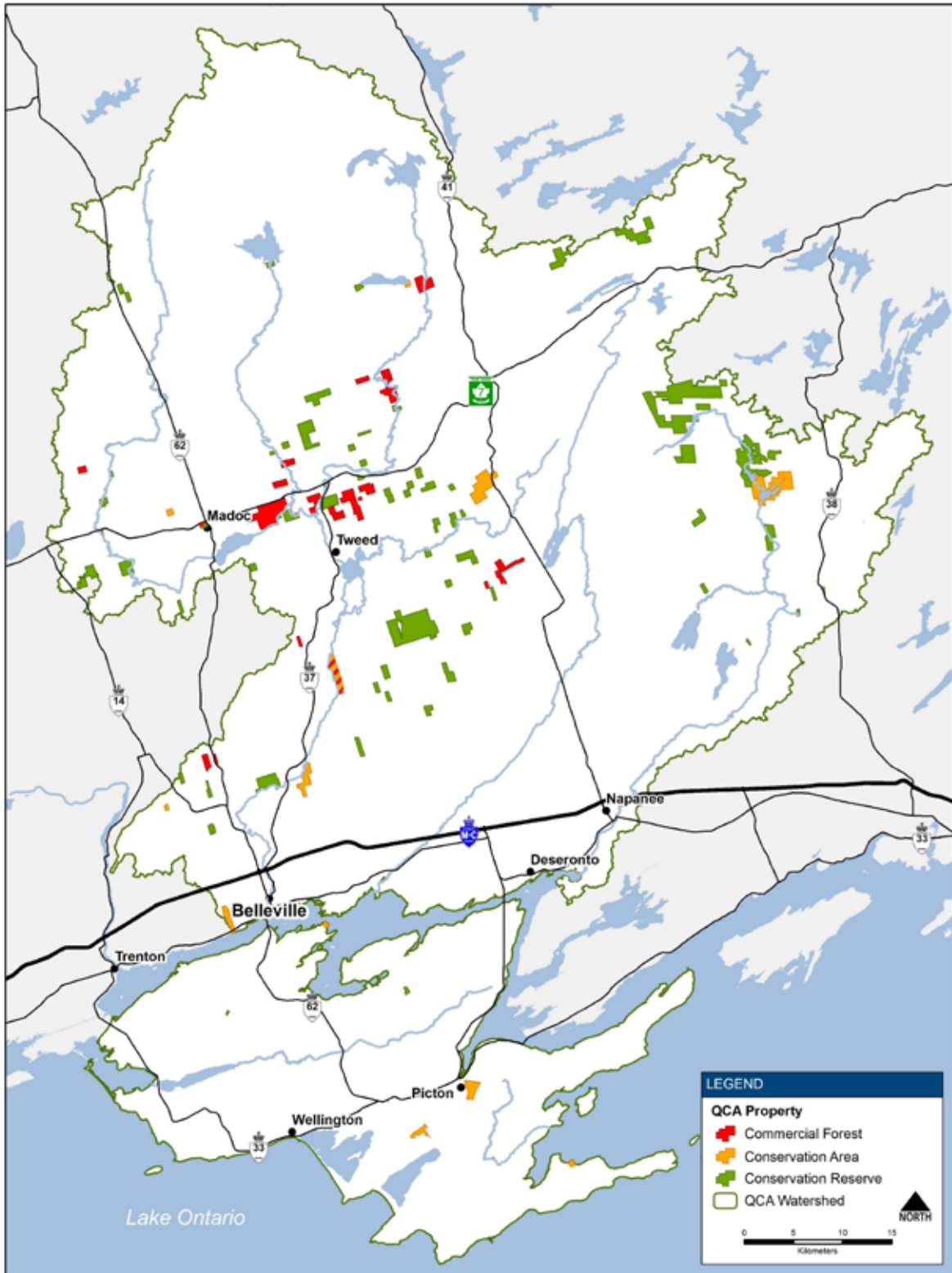
Educational Properties



Water Management Structures



Master Map





Quinte CONSERVATION

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Watershed Municipalities

City of Belleville
City of Quinte West
County of Prince Edward
Loyalist Township
Madoc Township
Municipality of Centre Hastings
Municipality of Marmora and Lake
Municipality of Tweed
Town of Deseronto
Town of Greater Napanee
Township of Addington Highlands
Township of Central Frontenac
Township of North Frontenac
Township of South Frontenac
Township of Stirling-Rawdon
Township of Stone Mills
Township of Tudor and Cashel
Township of Tyendinaga