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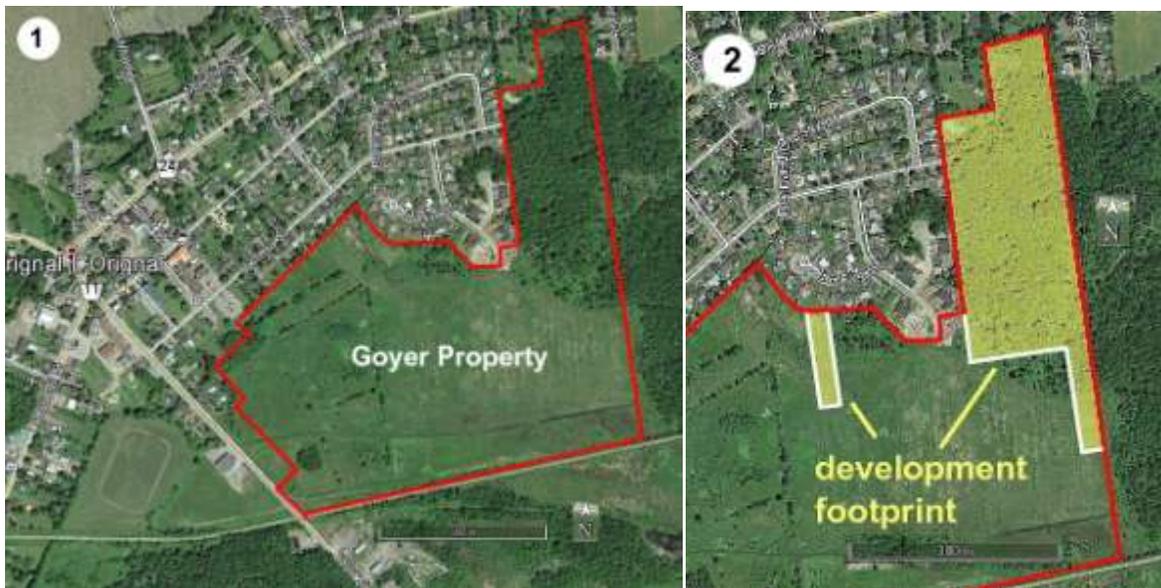
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Ecological Impact Statement: Goyer Property, L'Original, Ontario

Residential development is proposed for the Goyer Property (Part of Farm Lot 10, Plan 15) in the former village of L'Original, Township of Champlain, United County of Prescott- Russell) (Figure 1). As part of the development review and approval process, the United County of Prescott- Russell (UCPR) requires that an environmental assessment be conducted of the property in general and the first phase in particular (Figure 2).

The first phase of development calls for approximately 70 individual units with a supporting storm water pond facility (the southward projection in Figure 2). A separate park area is proposed approximately 100 m west of the residential development area. The remainder of the Goyer Property will remain as active agricultural land until such time as further residential development is deemed appropriate.



This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), along with an off-site review of pertinent documentation (see below), has been undertaken, as per the UCRP direction, to assess what if any natural environment constraints exist in or about the development footprint of the Goyer Property.

Context and Field Inspection

The majority of the Goyer property has long been transformed from a natural condition by agricultural activity, with natural woodland restricted to only the eastern portion. Much of the western portion of this landscape was dominated by regenerating agricultural land until recently. Clearing of this regenerating scrub and natural vegetation occurred in 2015-2016 to facilitate the property's transformation to active agricultural status (Figure 3). No significant natural environment values remain within this area now under soy bean cultivation.



Accordingly, when the site investigations were conducted by Daniel Brunton on 28 June and 24 August 2016, studies focused on the potential of the proposed residential development to have negative impacts on significant natural environment values in adjacent lands. This Adjacent Area is defined as the landscape within 120 m of the subject property boundary.

The site and adjacent lands were examined through a number of transects to visually assess the nature and condition of habitats (on adjacent lands) and to address the potential for significant natural environment features to be present. Significant Woodland and designated Species At Risk (SAR) considerations were given particular attention.

The on-site review was assisted by consultation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) on-line natural heritage values mapping. It indicates (Figure 4) that no significant natural environment features or functions were known from or adjacent to the subject property.

Links from the values map to MNR significant features data for the larger L'Orignal



area list only aquatic Ottawa River elements. There is no habitat nor potential for the occurrence of these features (a vascular plant and a reptile) within or adjacent to the Goyer Property.

Woodland is documented on the MNR values map as occurring in the eastern portion of the property (now eliminated) and in the adjacent lands to the east. Small unclassified wetlands are noted in the adjacent area and within the now-eliminated forest land. A channelized, east to west flowing stream crosses transformed landscape along the southern edge of the property.

Existing Conditions

The subject property has been completely transformed from a natural condition into active crop land (Figure 5) and thus retains no intrinsic natural environment values. As noted above and on the MNR values map, however, natural woodland habitat exists to the east and south adjacent to the subject property (Figures 3 and 5), with residential and transportation development to the west and north. The following habitat discussion applies to that adjacent woodland.



Woodland within the larger study area slopes from north to south and is dominated by deciduous cover, typically over clay substrate though with a small area of limestone bedrock outcropping evident along the eastern edge of the development area. These characteristics are reflected in the forest cover.

The northern 20% of the adjacent woodland is dominated by dry Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), White Pine (*Pinus strobus*), Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) forest over a sparse ground cover of somewhat drought-tolerant herbs and shrubs including Poison-ivy (*Toxicodendron rydbergii*), Red Baneberry (*Actaea rubra*), Marginal Shieldfern (*Dryopteris marginalis*), Bracken (*Pteridium aquilium*) and Wild Sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*). A Red Maple-dominated low area approximately 25 in diameter is located within the dry woodland. This seasonally flooded 'wetlette' is dominated by flood-tolerant ground species such as Cinnamon Fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*), Royal Fern (*O. regalis*), Winterberry Holly (*Ilex verticillata*) and Enchanter's-nightshade (*Circaea canadensis*). It was dry at the time of the 2016 site inspections.

A small portion (approximately 10%) of upland deciduous forest in the middle of the adjacent area woodland is situated in more mesic, deeper soil. It has developed a richer upland forest cover in which Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*), Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), Ironwood (*Ostrya*

virginiana), Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) and Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*) are conspicuous. The ground vegetation is more reflective of less-disturbed eastern Ontario upland forests, with typical species such as White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*), the sedge *Carex radiata* and Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*) being common.

The woodland of the adjacent area is otherwise a young to submature, low, disturbed deciduous woodland of Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), Red Maple and White Elm (*Ulmus americana*). At the south end where drainage outlets to the channel flowing east to west across the Goyer Property, this becomes saturated swamp forest. A dense undergrowth of invasive Common Buckthorn (*Frangula alnifolia*) has developed along the edges of the swampy woodland, with native species such as Wild Gooseberry (*Ribes cynosbati*), Rough Goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa*), the sedge *Carex crinita* and Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) also being evident.

Natural Environment Significance Implications

No designated provincially significant natural environment features such as SAR were evident within the Goyer Property. An individual Bald Eagle (SAR - Special Concern) and a single Chimney Swift (SAR - Threatened) were observed flying overhead on 28 June but neither utilized habitat within it. No potential for habitat for either species is evident in or adjacent to the Goyer Property.

A robust population of Hedge-hyssop (*Gratiola neglecta*), a regionally rare plant species, was recorded in the marshy eastern end of the channelized drain along the southern edge of the property (Figure 6). This likely represents the only record of the species in the UCPR of a typically uncommon species known sparingly upstream along the Ottawa River (Brunton 2005). The site is unaffected by the Phase 1 development being addressed in the present approval process.



None of the habitats described above for the Adjacent Area are uncommon or significant in eastern Ontario (Brunton 1995). Similarly, no significant features were observed here during the site inspections. The woodland habitat here appears to have a low potential to support examples of even the widely-occurring Bitternut (*Juglans cinerea*) tree, a designated SAR (Endangered). The woodland does offer potential habitat, however, for several SAR bird species, particularly the widely occurring Eastern Wood Pewee and Wood Thrush (Special Concern) and Whip-poor-will (Threatened).

The adjacent area woodland supports a number of bird species typical of larger eastern Ontario forests with areas of Interior Forest (i.e. areas well back from woodland edges where natural processes perform well). These include Ovenbird, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-eyed Vireo and Pileated Woodpecker. This faunal representation, along with substantial size of the woodland unit and the potential habitat for several SAR bird species, suggests that the large forest area extending eastward from the open edge of the Goyer Property could qualify as Provincially Significant Woodland (SW) and/ or Significant Wildlife Habitat (SWH) (Ontario 2012). The Provincial Policy (Ontario 2014) dictates that development in such Adjacent Areas must demonstrate how no loss of defining significant features and functions will result. It should be noted, however, that the County Official Plan (UCPR 2016) recognizes no Significant Woodland in this or other urban or community areas.

If the latter woodland does technically qualify as SW or SWH, however, the Adjacent Area of concern would extend 120 m into the Goyer Property from the east. Protection of significant defining values would likely focus upon ecological function concerns (size, corridor function, etc.) rather than species features (rare species, Significant Wetlands, etc.). In that event, the establishment of a buffer zone of re-established natural vegetation along the eastern edge of the development area may represent the best mitigation of negative impacts from the proposed development.

The potential impact on possible Adjacent Area values notwithstanding, then, the presently proposed development of the largely transformed Goyer Property presents no future negative implications for significant natural environment features or functions. This applies both to the proposed area of residential development in the east and the separate park proposal in the west.



Daniel Brunton

References

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