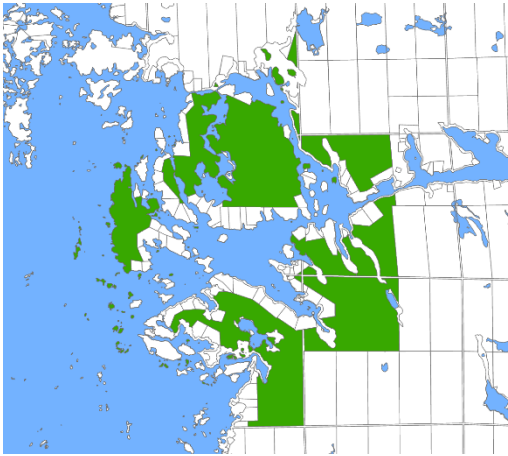




Land Stewardship Committee Recommendation Summary. September 4, 2021

Where are we now?

For 120 years, stewardship of the Club's "Open Lands" has been an important principle guiding the Club. These lands are of great environmental and ecological significance because development has been restricted. They are, in many ways, the Club's private park set aside for members and for future generations to enjoy and protect – we wish this to continue for future generations.



Our current Club Community Plan designates the 1,589 acres of "Open Lands" for the exclusive use of members and prohibits any further development.

The green section of this map indicates the Open Lands.

Altering the Plan requires a 2/3 majority vote by site holders.

Currently the Open Lands are part of the "Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program" which reduces our taxes on these lands by 75%.

Why were these lands set aside and why are they worth protecting from development?

Aside from extraordinary recreational value, the open lands constitute pristine wetland and interior lake and forest ecosystems. They provide habitat for the highest density of rare Canadian Shield animal and plant communities in Ontario, including the richest biodiversity of reptiles and amphibians in all of Canada. Critically, the Open Lands connect to other protected or semi-protected areas to the north and south of Go Home Bay including the Tadenac Club that has recently finalized a Conservation Easement protecting 5,400 acres of adjacent land. These linkages create a corridor along the eastern shore providing protected spaces for threatened and at-risk Canadian species.

Why a Conservation Easement?

The LSC's task was to identify the most effective way to enshrine the club's long-term vision of Open Land stewardship and protection for future generations. The review analyzed all available options, including maintaining the status quo, and concluded that a conservation agreement with a not-for-profit conservation organization or land trust is the most effective course of action. Such an agreement would retain our ownership, enshrine the development restrictions we currently have and continue to restrict access to these lands to members of the Madawaska Club and guests. It would also allow for uses currently permitted on the Open Lands and make provision for future activities that are consistent with the conservation intent of the agreement. And importantly, the agreement would provide long term protection from tax and rezoning risks. The agreement would be registered on title and the only ongoing role of the conservation body would be to ensure that the Club abides by the terms of the agreement



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that we create for ourselves. This type of agreement cannot be amended without the mutual consent of the Club, the conservation body and the provincial Minister of Environment. The full report can be found at <http://www.gohomebay.org/s/Land-StewardshipTask-Force-Report-Final.pdf>

It should also be noted that Conservation Easements on private property are a widely used and effective approach for environmental stewardship and protection throughout North America. To date there are over 130,000 conservation easement agreements in the U.S. and more than 2,000 in Canada protecting more than 27 million acres of natural space. There are approximately three dozen conservation easements in Muskoka and Georgian Bay, none of which have encountered problems.

Why do we need enhanced protection?

The primary risk to the Club with respect to maintaining the protection of the Open Lands is that the Club decides, or is forced, to sell all or a portion of the Open Lands. This could be a result of a material change by government to tax or zoning policies in response to development pressures that are increasing throughout cottage country. Alternatively, this could be the result of an unforeseen event that impacts the financial viability of the Club. A sale, whether voluntary or not, will result in the Club losing a portion of the Open Lands.

Development pressures exist. On Lake Joseph in Muskoka, for example, average cottage prices have doubled since 2014 with a commensurate increase in taxes. We are already seeing evidence of rising property values in our own community. This pressure will, in our view, eventually expose the Open Lands to re-evaluation which could, for example, lead to an assessment of the outside of Long Island based on the number of potential cottage sites deemed appropriate by municipal planners. This would force the Club to consider long-term solutions to a very challenging and possibly unaffordable tax burden. The Conservation Agreement, with its development restrictions, shields the Club from rezoning and large, market-based tax assessments.

Likewise, should the Club decide, or be forced, to sell the Open Lands, or any portion of them, the benefit of a Conservation Agreement is that the development and use restrictions set out in the Agreement will bind any subsequent owner of the lands, thus continuing the protection established by the Club. Rather than losing control, the restrictions established by the Club would continue to benefit Club members.

We asked the Tadenac Club why they concluded their conservation easement with the GBLT in 2019. They wrote:

“The world is a changing place. Places like Tadenac, were once a major ordeal to get to. That in itself was a significant level of protection. That was only 100 years ago. Now, its 2 hrs away. What will it be in another 100 years? What we do now is very important with respect to tomorrow....

“In our case, we have been the stewards and protectors of the Tadenac lands since 1885. We do a good job of it. However, to prepare for and address the pressures of tomorrow we believe that a strong team approach is required with partners [i.e. the GBLT] who have aligned interests ... Its about looking



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forward, not back. ...Having pristine ecosystems is rare and having the opportunity to observe and learn from them even rarer..... Environmental stewardship is a privilege, available to a few.”

Just as the Tadenac Club realized, the Go Home Bay community has the opportunity to permanently and strongly protect our Open Lands from development pressure and the vicissitudes of governments. Presently, government is the third party at our table capable of exerting control and change on our Open Lands. For those in the community wanting strong protection, the LSC recommends taking full control of our Open Lands and removing the threat of government interventions.

Other potential benefits of a Conservation Easement.

The Tadenac Club received \$967,000 from the Canada Nature Fund via a grant awarded the GBLT for their easement. Similarly, the Club would be in a highly competitive position to win a Canada Nature Fund grant for an easement on our “Open Lands”. For southern Ontario, the natural area of our open lands is large and we have the same high density of species at risk and endangered species as the Tadenac Club. Although there is no guarantee, the Club is favourably positioned to win a sizeable grant for our easement.

To review a list of the Community’s questions and answers, a separate addendum has also been distributed: [“2021 Summer Meeting Questions and Answers.”](#)

Next steps.

The Board has expressed its full support for the LSC’s recommendation and announced that a vote will be called at the spring AGM. The vote will be to determine if the community wants to proceed to protect the Open lands through a conservation easement with a Land Trust. If this passes, a final agreement will be drafted in consultation with the community and put to a second vote at a later date.

Between then and now, the community is invited to table additional questions or points of view on the [Mad Club website](#) or Facebook page. The LSC will continue to provide responses as well as new, relevant information or developments that arise. In the weeks preceding the AGM, the specific question will be distributed and the LSC will continue to organize virtual informational /Q & A sessions for members as needed.