

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Glenorchy Conservation Area Master Plan consists of development and restoration plans, resource and park management plans, as well as a preliminary assessment of capital and operating costs.

The vision of the master plan is to protect and enhance the significant natural features and ecological functions of the conservation area while providing opportunities for the public to gain an appreciation for this significant area, enjoy the spectacular views, and allow for limited recreational opportunities. This master plan will serve as the principal guiding document for the future planning, design, development and resource management of the conservation area in accordance with all relevant acts and regulations and with the terms and conditions of the property management agreement that Conservation Halton entered into with the Ontario Realty Corporation.

The entire 401 hectares of the property are to be protected and enhanced to achieve sustainability of a range of vegetation communities that will provide habitats for a broad diversity of species. Restoration projects have been prioritized based on the degree of ecological function the project is likely to restore or improve. A large tract of native grassland will be established in the centre of the conservation area. Treed swamp, riparian and other wetlands will be enhanced, restored or created. The tableland forested areas will see significant expansion, creating substantially increased interior forest habitat.

In the first ten years after the approval of this master plan, primarily restoration works will be undertaken. Public access will be limited during this period, until the Town of Oakville has constructed its community park that is cradled in the south end of the conservation area. However, a historic trail linking Palermo Park to the historic zone and a short valley trail adjacent to Oakville's new Fourth Line pedestrian bridge are proposed for construction during the first two years (completion of bridge expected 2010). Future recreational development within the conservation area will primarily consist of a trail system with interpretive nodes. Public access trails will not descend into the valley downstream of the Fourth Line crossing.

Interpretive and educational opportunities will include an interpretive trail system on the least sensitive areas of the upland portion of the site that will direct visitors to various interpretive nodes. Webcams will also be installed to record the actions of species in their habitats as well as the progress of the restoration works in the most sensitive areas of the site. Interpretive signage will be an important element of the trail system.

Initial discussions indicate that the Town of Oakville is willing to pursue a partnership with Conservation Halton to provide park amenities such as parking and washroom facilities on the adjacent parklands. This presents opportunities for collaboration in designing, locating and building such amenities.

In addition to the park management zoning plan, policies have been developed for species at risk; forest sustainability; dead and hazardous trees; plant and seed



collection; invasive species; herbicides, pesticides and suppressants; vegetation; fisheries and wildlife.

Conservation Halton is currently receiving an annual base level of funding from the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) for the management of the Glenorchy Conservation Area. However, the costing analysis presented in this report indicates that substantial additional funding will be required to complete and maintain the restoration works and recommendations of the Master Plan into the future. Potential sources of funding have been identified in this report and will be pursued. As an example, a portion of the ORC annual base funding should be dedicated to restoration, supplemented with potential assistance from the Region of Halton, Town of Oakville and others to facilitate a multi-year restoration project. In the past, Conservation Halton has also been successful in collaborating with various stakeholder and volunteer groups. It is anticipated that such parties will step forward to assist Conservation Halton in creating a vibrant, diverse and healthy natural environment.

Key actions outlined in the implementation of this plan include:

- Close and restore existing unauthorized roads and trails
- Secure the property from unauthorized and/or illegal uses such as hunting, dumping, motorized vehicles
- Prepare a detailed restoration plan for forest, wetland/riparian and grassland/prairie habitats
- Establish the proposed trail system and associated amenities such as interpretive signage, lookouts and webcams
- Develop a Visitor Impact Management program
- Monitor and protect species at risk
- Manage for invasive species
- Encourage and seek partnerships that support cost sharing and sponsorships

Evaluation of this master plan suggests that while the environmental sustainability of the area is ensured, further educational opportunities would benefit the community as well as the financial viability of the conservation area. The addition of an interpretive centre has been a much-debated component of this planning process. Currently, an interpretive centre is not proposed but the plan suggests this could be reconsidered in years to come based on evolving community needs (including a Town of Oakville official plan amendment and rezoning) and availability of financial resources.