OAK RIDGES MORAINE LAND TRUST

Stewardship Direction and Principles Policy

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust's ("ORMLT" or the "Trust") business is the long-term stewardship of ecologically significant lands on and near the Oak Ridges Moraine (the "Moraine") and the securement of such lands.

1.2 This Organization Policy sets out directions, goals, values and approaches for the Trust's stewardship obligations that are consistent with and governed by the Trust's Strategic Direction and Management Organization Policy.

1.3 The Trust's goal for stewardship is that the ecological integrity and other key values of all Trust protected properties will be maintained and enhanced over the long term according to the generally accepted standards for Canadian and Ontario land trusts (refer to Section 2 below).

1.4 The Trust's objectives and priorities for stewardship are consistent with the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices -2019 (CLTSP-2019)

1.4.1 The Trust adheres strictly to CLTSP 2019 Standards 11 and 12, which provide the key stewardship standards for land trust nature reserves and conservation agreements.

1.5 The Trust co-operates with many partners and funders (e.g. Conservation Authorities, municipalities, Ecological Gifts Program, the Oak Ridges Trail Association, stewardship councils, donors, foundations, etc.) in the stewardship of natural areas on and near the Moraine.

2.0 Stewardship Values

2.1 The Trust's conservation values are based on Science-based Stewardship, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and Donor-based Partnership and are defined as follows:

Science-based Stewardship: The Trust is guided by the best available conservation science to make responsible site-based management decisions that make a lasting difference.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Knowledge and values, which have been acquired by Indigenous Peoples through experience, observation, from the land or from spiritual teachings, and handed down from one generation to another.

Donor-based Partnership: The Trust works in a non-confrontational manner that focuses on donor collaboration, sensitive negotiation and practical consensus to reach mutual goals.

2.2 The Trust's principal interests are concerned with ecological health and natural sustainability.

2.3 The Trust will attempt to identify and communicate with Indigenous Peoples with possible interests in the property area to endeavour to incorporate Indigenous culture (e.g., place names), knowledge and values into the management plan of each property. Protocols to restrict publication of sensitive cultural information will be developed to ensure any values identified are not endangered or lost. We recognize that every Indigenous group, nation and community has its own history, culture, traditions and knowledge, and that certain values are common to many, such as respect for Mother Earth**.**

2.4 ***Combined Science-based Stewardship, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Donor-based Partnership:***

2.4.1 The Trust manages protected lands and waters with donors to ensure the long-term viability of significant natural features and ecological health.

2.4.2 The Trust respects and promotes nature's processes of growth and succession with only minimal disturbance. The Trust also protects the unique character of each property while supporting the conservation goals of our land donors and partners.

2.4.3 The Trust actively pursues opportunities with partners and private landowners in finding new ways to live productively and sustainably on and near the Moraine while conserving and improving biological health and diversity.

3.0 Stewardship Promise

3.1 The Trust pledges to donors, members, friends, partners and funders to faithfully pursue a long-term commitment to the wise and responsible care of its protected properties.

3.2 The Trust will pursue this promise through programs founded on science-based stewardship, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, donor-based partnership and continued, systematic, collaborative and professional monitoring of ecologically significant lands, natural areas and waters.

3.3 The Trust will carry out its fiduciary obligations in accordance with accepted standards for Canadian and Ontario Land Trusts.

4.0 Stewardship Funding

4.1 The Trust's financial priorities for stewardship care consider both the short- and long-term obligations for annual property monitoring, stewardship projects, policy compliance review, property taxes, liability insurance and related mandatory requirements.

4.2 Annual budget priorities for meeting the Trust's fiduciary stewardship obligations are ordered as follows:

4.2.1 Meet current stewardship obligations for all protected properties in our current land portfolio in accordance with generally accepted standards.

4.2.2 Source and obtain funding for essential operations that will allow the Trust to meet the future stewardship obligations for the current land portfolio.

4.2.3 Source and secure additional lands subject to our ability to fund the Trust's stewardship obligations (short-term and long-term) for these new properties.

4.2.4 Carry out other related program priorities if soundly funded and provided that all obligations for priorities in sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 above are met and upheld.

4.3 The Trust will assess its current and future stewardship obligations and endeavour to hold sufficient cash reserves to ensure these obligations will be met responsibly in perpetuity.

4.3.1 The Trust will undertake its assessment annually using accepted means for estimating the costs of long-term stewardship care of protected lands.

4.3.2 In the event that sufficient funds are not held in reserve, the Chief Executive Officer, in collaboration with the Audit and Finance Committee, will provide the Board of Directors with an action plan to manage the Trust's finances to correct this situation.

5.0 Stewardship Principles and Practices

5.1 The Trust manages its properties using sound stewardship principles and practices as approved by the Board of Directors.

5.2 The Trust is creative, flexible and practical in adapting these principles and practices to the unique features, ecological values and donor conditions for each property under protection.

5.3 There are four categories of stewardship principles that drive our stewardship practices:

5.3.1 ***Nature First:*** Lands and waters will be managed responsibly for nature conservation, based on significant natural features and ecological considerations that influence each site, consistent with the Trust mission to establish and protect nature reserves on the Moraine.

5.3.2 ***Community Stewardship:*** To the best of its ability, the Trust will involve Indigenous Peoples, donors, neighbours and communities in site planning, stewardship activity and conservation benefits to ensure that protected natural areas are widely appreciated within the community where they occur.

5.3.3 ***Restoration and Rehabilitation:*** Portions of nature reserves may be managed to enhance biodiversity targets, and some deliberate interventions may be taken to restore specific features and to remediate past disturbance. It is desirable to maintain and re-establish where necessary, the natural processes or ecological functions that can support native ecosystems.

5.3.4 ***Ecology and Succession:*** Principles of ecology and natural succession and Traditional Ecological Knowledge will guide our science-based and long-term stewardship. Natural ecological processes are encouraged to proceed without interference but may also be managed to conserve particular species and habitats.

5.4 Where relevant and useful to support implementation of CLTSP-2019 Standard 11, the Trust considers and references the guiding principles and practices in section 5.3 in negotiating and developing the specific content of restrictive covenants for proposed conservation agreements.

5.5 In accord with CLTSP-2019 Standard 12, the Trust applies the principles and practices in the ongoing management and stewardship of Trust owned lands including properties held in joint or partial ownership.

6.0 Stewardship Planning and Documentation

6.1 As part of negotiating, accepting and registering a land donation or conservation agreement, the Trust develops a Baseline Documentation Report (BDR) for conservation agreements and a Property Management Plan (PMP) for fee simple properties, which will be a record of the initial condition and values of the property.

6.2 The Trust develops Property Management Plans for Trust owned lands and provide landowners with Best Management Practices and stewardship information for conservation agreements.

6.3 Property Management Plans must consider:

6.3.1 The Baseline Survey for protected ecology;

6.3.2 Stewardship values, principles and long-term care

6.3.3 The approved conditions in donor agreements; and

6.3.4 Best practices that will protect, maintain, improve or restore protected resources and conservation values.

7.0 Annual Monitoring of Protected Properties

7.1 The Trust has a legal, fiduciary and ethical responsibility to monitor the properties it protects. Monitoring is not optional.

7.2 Land donors expect that the ecological values of the donated land will be protected for future generations that the Trust will ensure, by regularly monitoring the property, that significant changes are recorded and dealt with in a responsible manner and that property records are maintained.

7.3 If, and when, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) has determined that a property qualifies as an Eco-Gift, the associated tax benefits of such designation gives ECCC the right to insist that the property's ecological values not be degraded by present or future landowners. Therefore, the Trust must responsibly monitor the status of those values on owned properties. In the case of conservation agreements properties, the Trust is obligated to monitor the restrictions within the agreement.

7.4 Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry ("OMNRF") must agree to any changes in a conservation agreement. Environment and Climate Change Canada approval must be obtained for "Changes in Use" if the property was formally approved as an Eco-Gift donation. Approvals must be obtained prior to any changes being made. The Trust is obliged; therefore, to monitor the status of all conservation agreements as well as Trust owned lands.

7.5 Trust properties and conservation agreements are monitored to ensure that they are being adequately and appropriately protected and managed.

7.6 Monitoring is to take place at least annually.

8.0 Landowner Relations

8.1 The Trust will maintain regular contact with owners of conservation agreement properties to maintain relationships and avoid potential agreement conflicts

8.2 The Trust will establish systems to track changes in land ownership

8.3 When the property changes hands, the Trust will attempt to meet with the new owner or property manager to ensure the new owner obtains:

a) A copy of the conservation agreement documents

b) Information in writing about the conservation agreement

c) Copies of the Trust's stewardship policies and procedures

9.0 Amending and Improving Agreements

9.1 From time to time, the Trust may need to consider amending a conservation agreement.

9.2 Landowners may want to make a beneficial change in use that can provide more protection for specific natural values and the Trust will work with the landowner to obtain approval of acceptable use changes.

9.3 The Trust amends a conservation agreement only after review by both staff and the Land and Stewardship Committee of any proposed benefits and approval of the Board of Directors and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

9.4 Changes to conservation agreements under the Eco-Gifts Program also require approval of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC).