

Huron Stewardship Council Terms of Reference

Strategic Direction

1. Vision

A healthy natural landscape that is:

- *valued by the Huron County community;*
- *managed sustainably by landowners and other partners, and;*
- *utilized in a balanced way for multiple benefits to the Huron community (e.g. economic, human health, recreation, etc.).*

2. Mission

To advocate and implement responsible ecosystem-based management of our natural resources, through cooperative efforts of the Huron County community.

3. Principles

We believe...

- in fostering a stewardship ethic among members of the Huron community (i.e. we have a responsibility to future generations to provide them with a healthy natural ecosystem);
- natural ecosystem features provide multiple benefits to the Huron community and we should be committed to their protection, enhancement and restoration;
- we can accomplish more by developing partnerships (i.e. by working together with others) and by fostering cooperation and networking between interested organizations and individuals;
- we should endeavour to build local abilities to work towards ecological sustainability (e.g. by providing educational opportunities and information, as well as promoting awareness, knowledge and appreciation for natural resource features).

4. Resource Priorities

4.1. Natural Areas (particularly Woodlands)

- Improve quality of existing natural areas
- Where possible, increase amount of natural area or linkages between them

(Rationale: average forest cover in Huron County is approximately 15 per cent, with some municipalities as low as 6 per cent. Presence of wetlands is very low in some areas. Research suggests 20 to 30 per cent forest cover and at least 10 per cent wetland cover is needed to maintain ecological health. Some natural areas continue to be lost to agriculture, development and other pressures. Forest health and productivity is less than optimum (i.e. considering indicators such as stocking, tree size class representation, diversity of tree, shrub and woodland plant species, etc.).

4.2. Wildlife (and Fish)

- Create and enhance habitat
- Maintain and restore species diversity

(Rationale: natural areas are a key habitat and are at lower than optimum levels. Fragmentation and size (i.e. interior) of existing habitat further reduce suitability. Channelization of watercourses as well as water quality and quantity issues impact on quality of aquatic habitat.)

4.3. Water

- Maintain or improve water quality and quantity

(Rationale: quality of water for drinking and recreational purposes is an important issue in Huron County. Low water levels impact fish and wildlife habitat and populations as well as recreational activities.)

5. Activity Priorities

5.1. Awareness (Education and Information)

- Facilitate provision of educational and awareness opportunities
- Profile responsible management practices
- Promote development and distribution of information resources
- Profile existing programs that support responsible stewardship

5.2. Partnerships and Community Development

- Maintain or strengthen existing partnerships and establish new partnerships in order to develop programs and access resources that support stewardship actions
- Facilitate networking, cooperation and collaboration between organizations and individuals with parallel interests

Administrative Direction

6. Membership

6.1. Size of Council

It is imperative that council size be large enough to provide sufficient representation, but be small enough to operate efficiently and productively. It is recommended that council be composed of a minimum of 9 to a maximum of 11 voting members. Representation may also be requested from key agencies in a non-voting, technical support and advisory role if they are not adequately represented within the core council. Honorary councillors may also be appointed in a non-voting, advisory and support role.

6.2. Qualification for Membership

In order to qualify for consideration as a council member, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Resident or Landowner in Huron County
- Supports the Visions and Values of the Council
- Recommendation by the Nominating Committee after consideration of membership recruitment and selection criteria or appointment by the Council

6.3. Term of Membership

The term of membership for councillors will be three years. Membership terms will correspond with the fiscal year. To provide for continuity, it is recommended that not more than one third of council members be replaced each year. Members are encouraged, if possible, to provide sufficient advance notice of intended retirement to allow adequate time for recruitment and selection of new members.

6.4. Nomination Committee

A nomination committee will be formed, as needed, to fill council vacancies. The said committee will consist of three council members plus the Stewardship Coordinator as an ex officio member. The committee will, in accordance with the membership recruitment and selection criteria:

- establish a process for identifying potential members
- identify potential members
- review qualifications of potential members
- recommend potential members to the full council for appointment to council.

6.5. Council Representation

Councillors will participate as individuals and members of the Huron Stewardship Council, not as representatives of other organizations. Of course, councillors will be expected to speak from the perspective of backgrounds they represent, as this is what their selection as council members is based upon in large part.

6.6. Membership Recruitment and Selection Criteria

It is important that membership represent the diverse land and resource interests present in Huron County. With a voting membership of from 9 to 11 members, it is recognized that it may not be possible to have representation from all groups or interests. The following selection criteria will provide a guideline for recruitment and selection of membership candidates with diverse backgrounds and interests, thus attempting to provide representation from key groups that are identified, as well as a wide variety of other interests. The nomination committee, when recruiting new members, will attempt to ensure that the composition of the Stewardship Council will reflect the following membership criteria, as closely as is reasonably and practically possible.

6.6.1. Demographic Representation

All reasonable efforts will be made to recruit membership interest in a way that will ensure county demographics (e.g. age, sex and location within the county) are represented on council. However, selection of council members will be made based on the best candidate for the position, according to membership criteria that is established; not according to demographics.

6.6.2. Land or Resource Interest

An initial prerequisite for consideration of candidates for membership, is a demonstrated personal interest in the land or natural resources of Huron County. This could be through involvement in several areas (examples in brackets):

- production dependent on land or other resources (agricultural crops)
- resource utilization that is consumptive (harvest of forest products, hunting, angling, trapping) or non-consumptive (naturalist, wildlife viewing, recreational trail user)
- demonstrated concern for proper land and resource management (furthering resource education)

6.6.3. Community Representation (Council Makeup)

(a) Key Ownership / Interest Backgrounds

Of the voting council positions, membership will be recruited representative of a variety of interests and backgrounds. Following is a suggested guideline:

Farmer Representatives (farming being a primary occupation) and *Industry Representatives* (retail, manufacturing, production or other industry, whether related to agriculture, or not).

Land or Resource Use Interest Representatives (part-time farmers, naturalist, angler/hunter, other recreational user, forest industry, recreational property owner, forested property owner, other rural resident)

Urban Representatives (resident of a village, town, subdivision or cottage development)

(b) Key Groups or Organizations

While official representatives from organizations are not sought, it is important to ensure a relationship is established and maintained with key, county wide organizations, such as Huron County Federation of Agriculture, Huron County Soil and Crop Improvement Association, Central Huron District Association of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, Huron Fringe Field Naturalists, the Huron/Perth Chapter of the Ontario Woodlot Association, and others as identified.

(c) Key Agencies

A Huron County Councillor is appointed to the Stewardship Council annually in December. The Councillor functions as a core, voting member of council, represents their community background, and provides a communication link to the County.

6.7. Honorary Council Members

Honorary Councillors may be appointed from time to time. Typically, Honorary Councillors would be prominent citizens of Huron County and / or significant supporters. They would participate in an advisory role, perhaps represent the council at functions and help to promote the council and initiatives.

7. Duties of Council Members

- (a) Regularly attend and actively participate in council meetings.
- (b) Represent the Huron County community in developing and supporting stewardship initiatives and ideas within and beyond Huron County.
- (c) Representing the Stewardship Council, as necessary, on committees, at meetings or other functions, etc.
- (d) Selecting officers from within their number.
- (e) Participate in managing the business of the council including, establishing operating guidelines, setting priorities, developing and implementing work plans, etc.

8. Officers

The officers shall consist of a Chair and Vice-Chair. Officers shall be selected from council members by fellow councillors through an election process that will normally take place at the annual meeting. Their term of office will one year in length and coincide with the fiscal year.

The outgoing chair may serve one year as Past-Chair, to help maintain continuity.

The role of Secretary will be filled on a permanent basis by the "Stewardship Coordinator".

9. Duties of the Officers

9.1. Chair

The Chair shall:

- (a) preside at all meetings of the Council
- (b) represent the Council in the community
- (c) work with the Stewardship Coordinator to prepare meeting agendas
- (d) start and adjourn meetings as outlined in the agenda
- (e) call special meetings as necessary
- (f) encourage discussion from those councillors present at the meeting and vacate the chair if wishing to participate in such discussions
- (g) with the Vice-Chair and Treasurer, or other council member as designated, maintain signing authority for the Stewardship Council

9.2. Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair shall:

- (a) assist the Chair as required;
- (b) assume the full responsibility of the Chair during his/her absence;
- (c) assume the office of Chair for the balance of the unexpired term in the event it becomes vacant;
- (d) with the Chair and Treasurer, or other council member as designated, maintain signing authority for the Stewardship Council.

9.3. Past-Chair

The Past-Chair shall:

- (a) assist the Chair and Vice-Chair as required;
- (b) give freely of their experience and knowledge to ensure continuity for the Council.

9.4. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall:

- (a) with the Chair and Vice-Chair, or other council member as designated, maintain signing authority for the Stewardship Council.
- (b) Perform other duties as required by the Stewardship Council.

9.5. Secretary

The Secretary shall:

- (a) Conduct correspondence on behalf of the Council;
- (b) Prepare and distribute meeting notices and appropriate supporting or background information;
- (c) Prepare, distribute and maintain records of proceedings from Stewardship Council meetings;
- (d) Retain documents and files on behalf of the Stewardship Council;
- (e) Keep financial records of all receipts and disbursements of the Council;
- (f) Prepare interim financial reports for regular Council meetings and an annual financial report at the conclusion of each year, which is reviewed by an Officer and council.

10. Administration

10.1. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year will begin on April 1 and end on March 31 of the following calendar year.

10.2. Meetings

- (a) There will be a minimum of six Council meetings per year.
- (b) An annual general meeting will be held within 90 days of the end of each fiscal year. Business to be dealt with at the meeting will include change of officers, annual financial report and budget review, review of accomplishments and discussion of work plan for the coming year.

10.3. Personal Expenses

Stewardship Council members will be reimbursed for personal expenses incurred while attending regular meetings or carrying out other business associated with Council activities including personal vehicle use at the County's reimbursement rate, meals, registration fees, and postage. Individuals have the option of contributing this back to project funding. Expense claims must be submitted within two months of the end of the fiscal year in which the expense is incurred.

10.4. Decision Making

Decisions of the Stewardship Council will be reached by consensus where possible (i.e. close enough to agreement that there is no formal objection). In the event that consensus is not possible, but an immediate decision is required, formal votes will be called and the majority shall rule. Each councillor, including the Chair and Vice-Chair, will have one vote. Staff (i.e. Stewardship Coordinator) or agency advisors may participate in discussions, but will not have voting privileges.

10.5. Quorum

A quorum shall be 50% of council members. If this works out to a decimal, the number will be rounded up to the next whole number. If there is no quorum, the meeting may proceed, but major decisions will be deferred.

10.6. Financial

- (a) The Secretary is authorized to spend for administrative items as required to support council activities, up to but not exceeding \$500.00 per item. Such expenditures will be reported at the next Council meeting.
- (b) Committees of Council are authorized to spend for administrative items as required to support council activities, up to but not exceeding \$500.00 per item. Such expenditures will be reported at the next Council meeting.
- (c) Expenditures of over \$500.00 require prior approval by council vote.
- (d) The financial records maintained by the Secretary will be reviewed annually by a qualified, independent auditor to ensure they are accurate, complete and in a suitable format.

10.7. Termination

Council membership shall be terminated:

- (a) if the member resigns from the Council in writing;
- (b) the member misses four scheduled meetings in succession, or more than 50% of scheduled meetings in any twelve month period without legitimate reason, as accepted by Council (Scheduled meetings include council meetings or meetings of council committees);
- (c) if the person's membership is terminated by a resolution passed by 3/4 majority vote of the full Council at a Council meeting.

10.8. Conflict of Interest

A councillor who in any way, directly or indirectly, may have a conflict of interest with any activity or transaction being considered by Council, shall disclose the nature of their potential conflict and may be asked to leave the discussion and not participate in any decision relating to the subject of potential conflict.

10.9. General

- (a) If the Chair and Vice-Chair are both absent, an acting chair will be appointed from the members present, for the duration of the meeting.
- (b) If representatives of other organizations or members of the general public wish to address council at a meeting, they must contact the Chair or Stewardship Coordinator sufficiently in advance of the meeting that they can be placed on the agenda.

11. Committees

Committees may be formed, from time to time, to deal with specific topics. Upon completion of their mandate, such committees will be dissolved. The mandate and time frame for committees should therefore be clearly defined before they are formed. Committees may be composed of a sub-group of council members, or include non-council members as needed. Where non-council members are included, council members should chair the committee and play a leadership role, as well as reporting progress to the council on a regular basis.

12. Banking

Banking will be carried out through an account at the Libro Credit Union Ltd. Or other equivalent financial institution. Signing authority for cheques will be any two (2) of the following: Treasurer, Chair, Vice-Chair, or other council member as designated.

13. Amendments

This Terms of Reference for the Huron Stewardship Council will be reviewed regularly and may be amended at any meeting of the Stewardship Council by 3/4 majority vote of the full council. Notice of proposed amendments must be given 30 days prior to voting.

14. Dissolution

Upon dissolution of the Huron Stewardship Council, all funds or other assets of the council will be transferred to organizations or initiatives in Huron County that are supportive of proper resource stewardship, as decided by those councillors in place at the time of dissolution.

15. Policies

Policies shall be reviewed by the Stewardship Council annually at a minimum, and new policies may be added as needed.

The following human resources policies have been adopted by the Stewardship Council:

- Accident reporting (adopted March 23, 2017)
- Conduct and behaviour (adopted March 23, 2017)
- Conflict of interest (adopted March 23, 2017)
- Drivers licence (adopted March 23, 2017)
- First aid certification (adopted March 23, 2017)
- Respect in the workplace (adopted March 23, 2017)