Protecting Biodiversity in Ontario; the Environmental Commissioner’s Perspective

High Park Stewards
Howard Park Tennis Club
January 28, 2018
Ellen Schwartzel, Deputy Commissioner
Overview

Ontario biodiversity policy:
- species at risk
- protected areas

• Ontario’s Environmental Bill of Rights (basics)
The government of Ontario

What are its environmental responsibilities?
The government of Ontario has broad environmental responsibilities:
an Environmental Bill of Rights

• Why?
Before the *Environmental Bill of Rights*

Little transparency:

- No obligation to consult the public
- No obligation to explain decisions
What is under the *EBR* umbrella?
What is under the *EBR* umbrella?

15 ministries, including:

- Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
- Natural Resources and Forestry
- Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- Energy
- Municipal Affairs
- Housing
- Northern Development and Mines
- Transportation
Environmental Bill of Rights

Helping you:

• Have your say on environmental decisions

• Ask for new environmental laws and policies

• Ask for enforcement of environmental rules
Environmental Commissioner of Ontario

• Impartial
• Officer of the Legislature
• environmental watchdog
Environmental Commissioner of Ontario

- Impartial
- Officer of the Legislature
- Environmental watchdog
- Dianne Saxe
Ontario’s Environmental Bill of Rights:

- Tools worth using
- Tools have limitations
- Tools + practice = better results
Tools that have worked:

- The Environmental Registry
- Applications for Review and Investigation
- Appeals
- Environmental Commissioner’s Office
Having Your Say: the Environmental Registry

What do you think?
www.EBR.gov.on.ca

Ontario
Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
Having Your Say: the Environmental Registry

What do you think?
www.EBR.gov.on.ca

Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
30 DAYS
The Environmental Registry

• Shows the public what ministries are working on

• Lets the public comment **before** decisions are made

• Shows the comments of other people

• Shows how the ministry considered public comments

~1000 users daily
What’s on the Registry?
What’s on the Registry?

- Permits to Take Water
- Renewable Energy Approvals
- Land Use Plans
- Environmental Compliance Approvals
- Climate Change Strategies & GHG Regulations
- Drinking Water Protection Laws & Regulations
Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2017):

- sets targets for intensification
- “Complete communities”
- Curb sprawl
- Protect natural areas
What’s on the Registry? example

Development Lands for the Greater Golden Horseshoe: How much is needed? (a method)

- 71 days comment period (MMMAH)
- Registry #013-2016
- Comment until February 28, 2018
What’s on the Registry? example
What’s on the Registry? example

Kentucky Coffee-tree
What’s on the Registry? example

Three Species at Risk:

• Blue Ash
• Gypsy Cuckoo Bumble Bee
• Kentucky Coffee Tree
What’s on the Registry? example

Three Species At Risk:

Proposed Government Response Statements:

• 30 day comment period; (MNRF)
• Registry #013-1865
• Comment Deadline was January 12, 2018
What’s on the Registry? example

Ecological Integrity in Provincial Parks and Conservation Areas

• 90 day comment period (MNRF)
• Registry #013-1671
• Comment deadline was January 24, 2018
Our alert service

YOUR RIGHTS
Under the Environmental Bill of Rights, Ontarians have a right to know about — and have a say in — government decisions that affect the environment.

CLIMATE, ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT
We report on compliance with the Environmental Bill of Rights, and Ontario’s progress on climate change, energy conservation, and other environmental issues.

WHO WE ARE
The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO) is an independent officer of the Legislature, who reports on government progress on climate change, energy and other environmental issues. The ECO is the province’s environmental watchdog and champion of Ontarians’ environmental rights.
Our alert service
Making the Registry Work Better

• Software badly needs upgrading

• Functions needed:
  • Alerts
  • Geographic searches
  • Updates
  • Ministry names
Most Comments 2016/2017

1. Moratorium on Permits to Take Water for water bottling – 21,276
2. Hunting rules for snapping turtles and other wildlife – 13,461
3. Exempting Algonquin wolves from protection – 13,251
4. Hunting rules for wolves and coyotes in northern Ontario – 12,113 (plus 200,000 signatures on petitions)
The Environmental Registry

Do public comments matter?