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Greenspace audit identifies 63 natural sites



Viviry valley is cited in Teknika audit as Hudson's most valuable greenspace.

by Matthew Brett

HUDSON An expansive greenspace audit unveiled during a public consultation last Thursday identifies 63 wetlands and woodlands within the Town of Hudson's 2,185 hectares, 26 of them flagged for their significant ecological value.

Conducted between April 25 and Sept. 23, 2007 and updated May 14 of this year, the audit by consulting firm Teknika HBA was carried out to comply with directives from Quebec's Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks Ministry requiring all municipalities to commission such surveys.

Publicly available DVDs of the audit consist of a 201-page report and seven aerial maps of the municipality overlaid with information obtained through a geographic information system (GIS). The study included the entire territory of Hudson along with a 20 km radius around the municipal boundary with information provided by existing documents.

Excluded from the study was cultivated agricultural land, fallow or uncultivated land during the crop cycle and areas already under construction.

While the Town of Hudson could have limited the inventory to non-agricultural land, council mandated Teknika to include agricultural land, which accounts for 50 percent of the town's total area. Half of the town's total landmass is "urbanized" or developed, according to the 201-page document. Roughly a fifth of the municipality is still classified as greenspace 6.1 percent, or 133.45 hectares wetland and 15 percent, or 340 hectares, natural forest.

Of the forested areas, Teknika's biologists found 132 hectares of interest because of the flora and fauna they contain, while another 207 hectares are less significant.



Teknika HBA project director Patrice Bigras and Hudson urban planning manager Natalie Lavoie answer questions during a public consultation on the town's green space audit.

The only areas not surveyed were some 15 hectares of wetlands already part of municipal greenspace or too small to be of significance, the report notes.

The report uses a grading system based on the size, rarity, biodiversity, integrity and hydrological characteristics of the areas under study. A major factor in grading the wetlands was their hydroconnectivity; project director Patrice Bigras said a significant feature of Hudson's territory is the extensive linkage of areas with high ecological value.

Of the 15 woodlands of interest, two - a 12-hectare mature-maple sugarbush in the Como sector and a 40-hectare woodlot in Choisy were distinguished for their high ecological value at 97 points and 82 points respectively. The other woodlands received between 34 and 64 points, including two zoned for development in the urban perimeter.

Of the 35 wetlands identified, 26 were deemed ecologically valuable. Two wetlands the Viviry floodplain within the Whitlock Golf and Country Club boundaries and a marshland in the Gomo Gardens sector received 87 points and 82 points on the grading system respectively, because of their rarity, size, hydroconnectivity and biodiversity.

Particular attention was given to research of at-risk plant species, with an emphasis on areas favourable to those species. In the forested areas that scored highest for biodiversity, the researchers noted the presence of mainhair and ostrich ferns and the two-leafed toothwort, all considered rare in this part of Quebec, while the wetland flora included wild garlic, trilliums and temperate-zone orchids.

Although Teknika HBA was not mandated to document the bird species and mammals that inhabit the town, traces of birds and mammals such as trails, droppings, tooth marks and holes were documented in the final report.

More than 48 bird species were identified on the territory, including the wetland-loving least bittern, sedge wren and marsh owl. Teknika's team recorded 87 sightings of 18 types of amphibians, four of which are designated with "precarious" status under provincial guidelines - the midland chorus frog, map turtle, Blanding's turtle and the green garter snake.

Green Coalition president David Fletcher said a territory can be fought for under existing laws if an endangered species inhabits it.

Although the Lake of Two Mountains was not studied, the report notes the types of fish that inhabit the waterway, including the endangered yellow sturgeon. A number of bays are also deemed of interest because they abut significant wetlands. Boyer and Como bay were highlighted for their marshlands and aquatic flora. Urban planning manager Natalie Lavoie said the town has two options to follow in light of the report. Hudson can consult with the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs (MDDEP) to establish conservation guidelines for the town, or it can begin to implement bylaws to enforce conservation measures immediately. Both options can be conducted together, Lavoie said Friday.

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