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MONARCH POINT

Conservation Reserve Background Information

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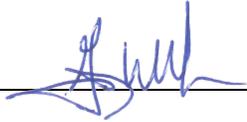
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Approval Statement

I am pleased to approve this background information document, which will inform the development of the Monarch Point Conservation Reserve management plan. This document consolidates information about the conservation reserve's natural and cultural values and current land use. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is continuing to gather updated and new information on the conservation reserve. Collectively, this information will be used to support the management planning process as outlined by the Ontario Protected Areas Planning Manual.

I invite you to review and comment on this document.



Greg Walsh
Southeast Zone Manager
Ontario Parks Operations

17/02/2026

Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

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1 Introduction

Monarch Point Conservation Reserve is a 1,607 hectare protected area that lies along Lake Ontario on the southern shore of Prince Edward County. The conservation reserve is in southern Ontario, approximately 175 kilometres east of Toronto and 55 kilometres southwest of Kingston (Figure 1).

The conservation reserve was established on June 16, 2023. It is administered by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), Ontario Parks Operations Branch, Southeast Zone.

The *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006* states that a management plan must be prepared for each provincial park and conservation reserve in Ontario. There is no existing management plan for Monarch Point Conservation Reserve and the purpose of this background information document is to support the preparation of a management plan for the conservation reserve.

This document consolidates information and identifies key information sources that will be considered during the management planning process. The document also highlights some key management topics to consider in planning for the conservation reserve. It provides an opportunity to seek input from Indigenous communities, the public and stakeholders that will be considered in the development of a preliminary management plan for the conservation reserve.

1.1 Boundary

Monarch Point Conservation Reserve is located in southern Ontario, approximately 175 kilometres east of Toronto and 55 kilometres southwest of Kingston (Figure 1). It was established on June 16, 2023 by regulation under the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*. The boundary of the conservation reserve is designated by O. Reg. 315/07 under that Act.

The 1,607 hectare conservation reserve lies along Lake Ontario on the southern shore of Prince Edward County (Figure 2). It consists of two separated pieces of previously acquired Crown land, formerly known as the Point Petre Provincial Wildlife Area and the Ostrander Point General Use Area. As a result, the eastern and western blocks of land within the conservation reserve are still commonly referred to as Ostrander Point and Point Petre, respectively. The conservation reserve includes the adjacent bed of Lake Ontario, generally to a distance of 30 metres from the shoreline, except at Charwell Point where the distance is extended. There are easements for a right of way and a power transmission line over lands within the Point Petre (western) block.

Figure 1 - Regional Setting

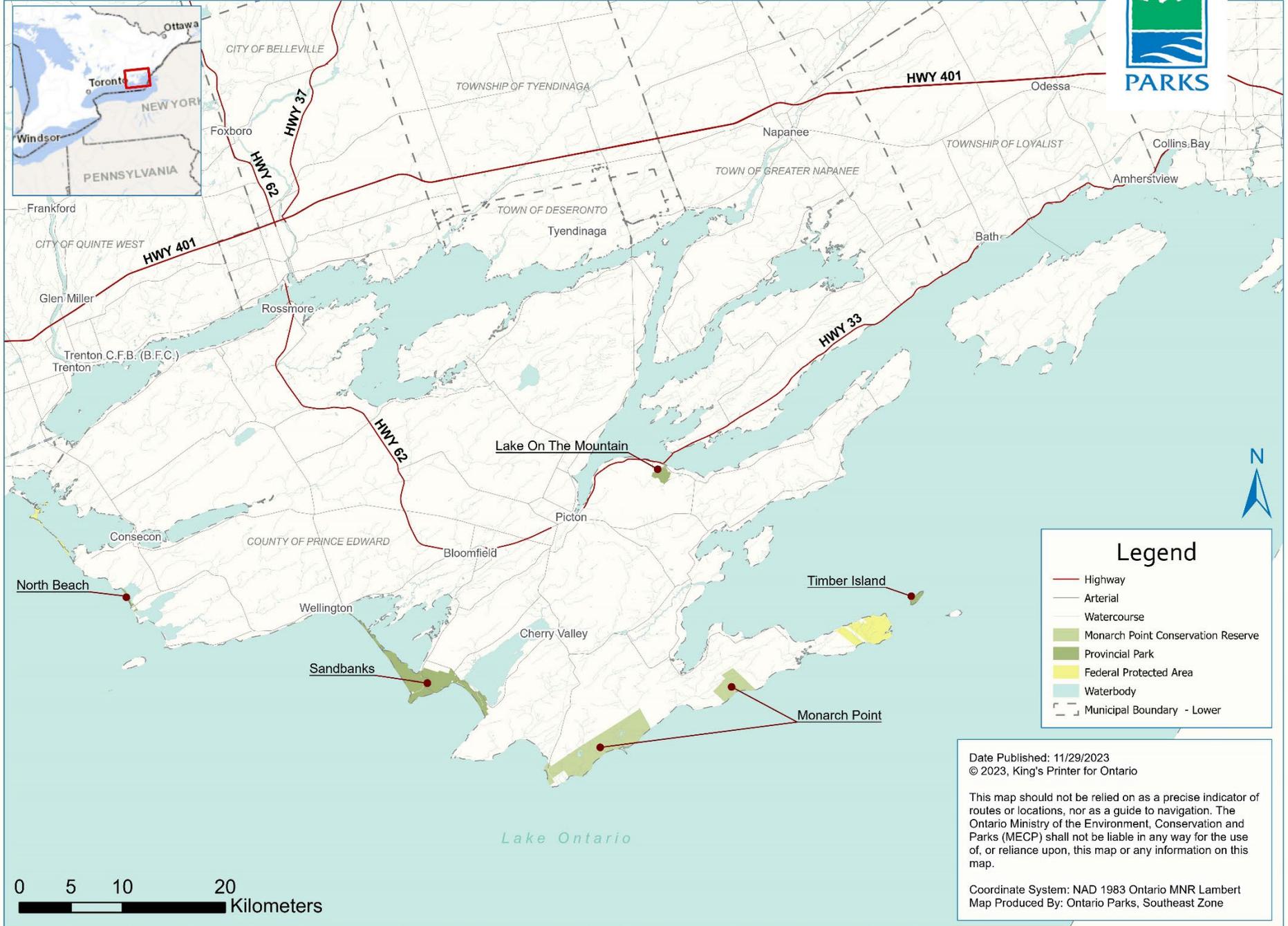
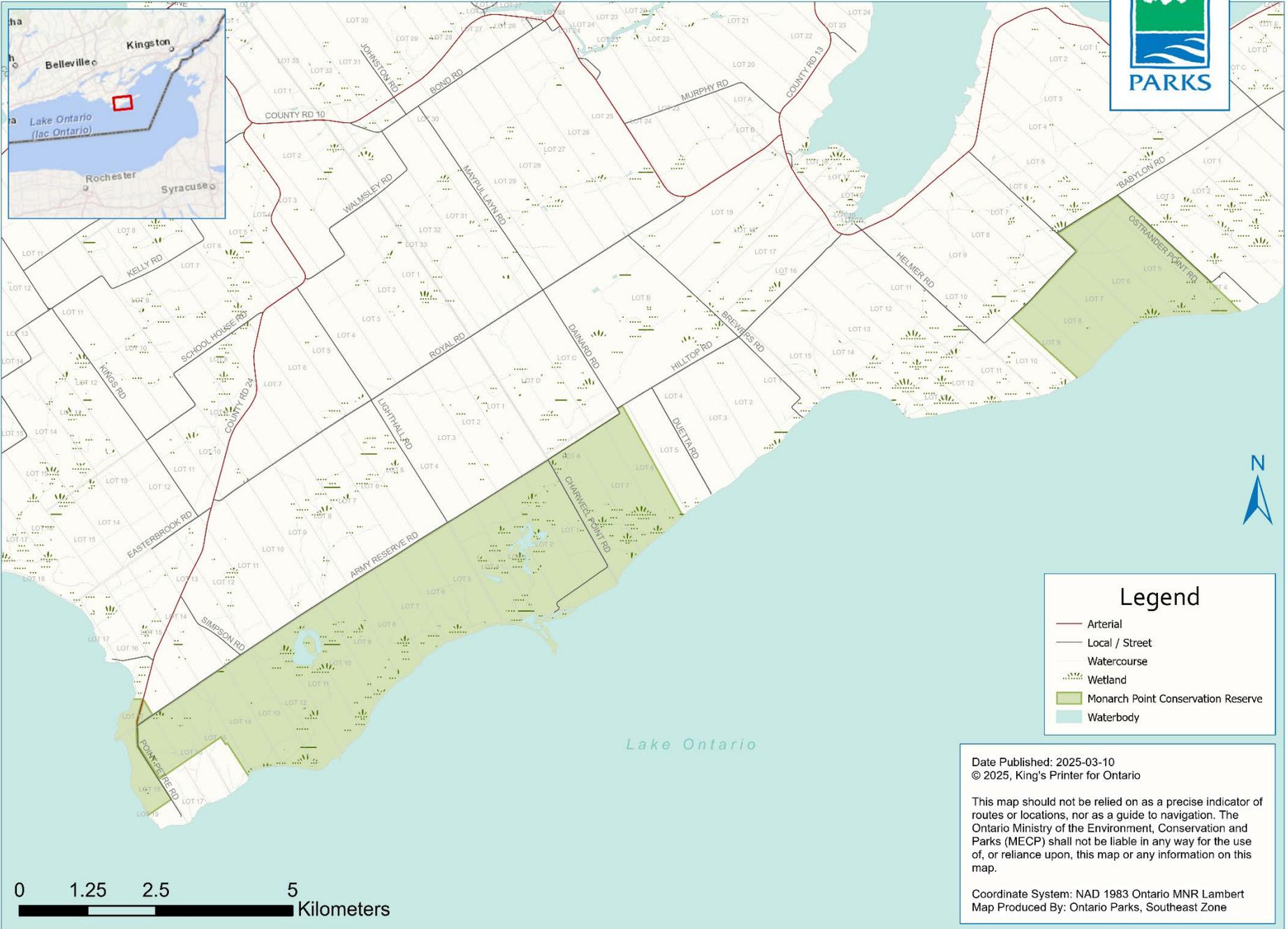


Figure 2 - Conservation Reserve Boundary



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This map should not be relied on as a precise indicator of routes or locations, nor as a guide to navigation. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) shall not be liable in any way for the use of, or reliance upon, this map or any information on this map.

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 Ontario MNR Lambert
 Map Produced By: Ontario Parks, Southeast Zone

The surrounding lands are predominantly rural and privately owned, including lands immediately adjacent to the conservation reserve that are owned by the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Lands to the southwest of the conservation reserve are owned and managed by Environment Canada. The federally protected Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area is also on the southern shore of Prince Edward County, approximately 8 kilometres to the east.

1.2 Indigenous context

Ontario respects Aboriginal and treaty rights recognized and affirmed by Section 35 of Canada's *Constitution Act, 1982*, and is committed to meeting its constitutional obligations in respect of Indigenous peoples.

Monarch Point Conservation Reserve is located within the treaty area of the Crawford Purchase of 1783. The Mississaugas of Alderville First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, and Scugog Island First Nation hold treaty rights under the Crawford Purchase. We understand that this area is of interest to the Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Georgina Island First Nation, and Beausoleil First Nation, and the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte. We also understand Kawartha Nishnawbe First Nation may exercise Aboriginal rights in this area. In addition, the conservation reserve is within Ontario's understanding of the primary area of interest to the Nation Huronne-Wendat (Huron-Wendat) in respect to archaeological resources. We recognize and respect the long history of the First Nations and Métis peoples in the province.

1.3 Planning context

The planning and management of conservation reserves is governed by the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*. Conservation reserves protect representative ecosystems, biodiversity and provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage while offering opportunities for ecologically sustainable land uses, including traditional outdoor heritage activities.

The *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006* establishes the purpose, objectives and guiding principles for establishment and management of Ontario's system of provincial parks and conservation reserves. The Act requires that a management plan be prepared for all provincial parks and conservation reserves.

The primary role of a protected area management plan, as outlined in Ontario's Protected Areas Planning Manual (2014), is to identify how the protected area contributes to achieving the objectives set out in the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*, and to identify site-specific management policies aimed at maintaining or enhancing that contribution. Once prepared, the management plan will guide protection,

development and management of protected area values and resources over a 20-year time horizon.

2 Purpose of the protected area

A site-specific purpose statement for Monarch Point Conservation reserve will be developed through the management planning process. It will reflect the purpose of the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*, which is:

- *to permanently protect a system of provincial parks and conservation reserves that includes ecosystems that are representative of all of Ontario's natural regions, protects provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage, maintains biodiversity and provides opportunities for compatible, ecologically sustainable recreation.*

The purpose statement will also reflect the following purpose of establishing the conservation reserve, which was originally stated on the Environmental Registry of Ontario in the decision to establish the conservation reserve. Monarch Point Conservation Reserve was created to provide opportunities for the community to enjoy the area's natural beauty, including hiking, hunting and birdwatching, while strengthening the long-term protection of biodiversity. The intent is to maintain and manage recreational opportunities within the conservation reserve while providing enhanced protection for unique habitats, such as globally rare alvar.

3 Values

Protected area values are the special attributes, features, or ecological functions within the protected area that may require additional or special consideration during the management planning process and subsequent management. The following sub-sections provide a summary of key values that have been identified for Monarch Point Conservation Reserve.

3.1 Natural heritage values and processes

3.1.1 Ecological integrity

The maintenance of ecological integrity is the first priority in the planning and management of Ontario's protected areas. Ecological integrity is a concept that addresses three ecosystem attributes – composition, structure and function. This concept is based on the idea that the composition and structure of the protected area should be

characteristic for the natural region and that ecosystem functions should proceed normally.

Since ecological integrity is a concept, it is difficult to measure. There are hundreds of aspects of ecosystems that could be measured at a variety of scales. Since there is no single approach to assessing ecological integrity, the approach adopted by MECP looks at the purpose of the protected area (why it was created and/or what role it plays in the protected area system), what features and values it contains, processes that occur and the pressures upon the protected area as a whole. The identification of values and pressures, and analysis to determine management priorities and appropriate actions to address those priorities, is considered the basis for maintaining and enhancing ecological integrity.

3.1.2 Life science values

Monarch Point Conservation Reserve is located within Ecodistrict 6E-15 (Picton), which is generally rural in nature. The ecodistrict landscape includes agriculture (with a significant area dedicated to growing grapes), business and industry, aggregate extraction, wind power and hydroelectric generation, and services associated with resource-based activities (Wester et al., 2008). Approximately 3% of the ecodistrict is designated as protected areas. Lake Ontario influences the climate of the ecodistrict by increasing humidity and precipitation resulting in colder springs, milder winters, and an extended summer growing season; vegetation with southern affinities are found here, as well as Great Lakes shoreline species, and alvar communities (Wester et al., 2008).

The conservation reserve protects many significant life science values, including large intact areas of provincially significant alvar communities, provincially significant wetlands, and 12 kilometres of undeveloped Lake Ontario shoreline (Barkley, 2020a,b). It is within an internationally recognized Important Bird Area and is an important migration area for migratory birds, bats and butterflies including the Monarch butterfly for which the conservation reserve is named. The conservation reserve supports a rich assortment of plants and animals, including many species at risk and provincially significant species. Waters of Lake Ontario along the south shore of Prince Edward County, including those within the conservation reserve, are important for aquatic species and are part of an important spawning area for Lake Whitefish (OMNRF, 2021; Kuisma, 1993). The relatively undeveloped nature of the area reduces light pollution, further supporting nocturnal and migratory species.

Portions of the conservation reserve have also been designated as regionally significant Black Creek Valley Marshes and Forests Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) and overlap the candidate provincially significant Prince Edward Point to Ostrander Point Life Science ANSI (OMNR, 2024).

The area supports moderate to high diversity of species and ecosystems relative to other existing protected areas in the ecodistrict. Forty-four (44) distinct vegetation communities have been identified using the province's Ecological Land Classification system (NCC, 2022). This diverse representation of vegetation communities includes open and treed alvars, inland and coastal marshes, swamps, shoreline, forests, bluffs, meadows, treed meadows, cultural grasslands and shrubland. There are two Ducks Unlimited constructed wetlands within the conservation reserve.

3.1.3 Earth science values

Monarch Point Conservation Reserve is within the Great Lakes Lowlands physiographic region. The conservation reserve area contains elements of the Upper Ordovician marine carbonate platform depositional environment, the Gribben Phase Nonglacial Environment, and recent Holocene organic deposits (Webster, 2020). The earth science features in the conservation reserve are typical of the area and are also captured in Timber Island Provincial Park. Earth science elements represented here are therefore considered regionally significant. Areas of the conservation reserve also overlap the candidate provincially significant Milford Black Creek Valley Earth Science ANSI.

3.1.4 Watersheds

Monarch Point Conservation Reserve is located within the Northeast Lake Ontario Shoreline (029C) watershed (OMNR, 2024). Drainage systems in the conservation reserve follow depressions in the bedrock and are short due to the close proximity of Lake Ontario (NCC, 2022).

3.2 Cultural heritage values

Indigenous communities have emphasized the cultural significance of the lands and waters within Monarch Point Conservation Reserve and Ontario Parks is engaging with Indigenous communities regarding these values within the conservation reserve.

Lands and waters within the conservation reserve also have a varied history of European settlement, including farming, military testing and training, marine use (e.g., shipping, fishing), and traditional and recreational land uses (Kuisma, 1993; Bray Heritage, 2018; ASI Inc., 2024). Many remnants of these historical uses remain, such as a cemetery, small pump house, remnants of demolished structures, and the Orenda Ring, a 1950s military jet engine testing site (ASI Inc., 2024).

Cultural material related to historical military and marine use has also been known to wash ashore. The cultural heritage significance of the broader South Shore of Prince Edward County has been recognized (Bray Heritage, 2018), and there is considerable local knowledge and interest in the history of these lands.

A Stage 1 archaeological assessment for the conservation reserve was completed in 2024 (ASI Inc., 2024). The report indicates that much of the conservation reserve area has potential for archaeological resources. The report considers various data sources, including previous archaeological assessments relevant to the area. Previous Stage 1 and 2 archaeological assessments have also been completed for areas of the Ostrander Point (eastern) block of the conservation reserve (Jacques Whitford, 2008; Stantec Consulting Ltd., 2011).

3.3 Land use values

The lands now within Monarch Point Conservation Reserve are valued by many for the wide range of recreational and land use opportunities that they provide. These opportunities are primarily based on the natural and cultural features within the conservation reserve. This includes long stretches of picturesque Lake Ontario shoreline and the wide variety of vegetation communities (e.g., wetlands, forests, meadows, rock barrens) that support a diverse wildlife population. Prior to establishment of the conservation reserve, management actions were undertaken to benefit wildlife with the objective of supporting recreational and land uses, particularly within the Pointe Petre Provincial Wildlife Area (Ives, 1973; Kuisma, 1993). Remaining evidence of historic settlement uses of land within the conservation reserve, such as the Orenda Ring, are important locally and also may attract visitors to the site from farther away.

Uses that occur within the conservation reserve are described in the Resource Use section below (Section 4.0).

4 Resource use

4.1 Land use

Monarch Point Conservation Reserve provides opportunities for a wide range of recreational activities and land uses. This includes opportunities throughout the conservation reserve area for traditional outdoor heritage activities, which support the objectives for conservation reserves within the protected areas system. Hunting occurs throughout the conservation reserve and is controlled and managed according to regulations under the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997* (FWCA) and *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*. Recreational fishing is also popular along the shoreline and may occur in some wetland areas of the conservation reserve, as controlled and managed under provincial and federal fisheries regulations (i.e., FWCA and *Fisheries Act*).

Along the scenic shoreline, exposed flat limestone bedrock and areas of pebble and cobble beach are used for a wide variety of water-based day uses, such as swimming,

picnicking, boating, canoeing, kayaking and other water sports. The western shoreline of the conservation reserve is particularly popular for these types of uses. At times, conditions such as strong wave surges along the shoreline may prevent safe conditions for swimming and other water sports. Natural and cultural heritage appreciation activities, such as bird watching, are also very common along the shoreline, but also occur throughout the conservation reserve's more accessible interior areas.

Camping is known to occur in multiple areas in both blocks of the conservation reserve, primarily along areas of the shoreline where there is road or trail access. Prior to establishment of Monarch Point Conservation Reserve, camping became a prohibited activity in Point Petre Provincial Wildlife Area as of August 1, 2015 when a ban on use was implemented between the hours of 22:00 and 04:00. Unauthorized camping has continued to occur in that area, which is now the western block of the conservation reserve.

There is a broad network of roads and trails of varying size and condition throughout the conservation reserve. Non-motorized trail-based activities that commonly occur include walking and hiking, bicycling, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. Motorized trail uses, including recreational all-terrain vehicle and motorized snow vehicle use, are also common. Unauthorized activities, such as off-trail motorized vehicle use, are known to occur.

4.2 Commercial use

The entire conservation reserve area is encompassed by two commercial bait harvesting areas (PB0058 and PB0081) that are managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). The waters of Lake Ontario support a commercial fishery that is also regulated and monitored by the MNR.

There are no other existing licensed commercial operations (e.g., trapping, bear management, tourism) or facilities within the conservation reserve.

5 Social and economic factors

Information on social and economic aspects can help with understanding the role of an area within the protected areas system and inform uses within the protected area. There is no current information on the specific social and economic benefits directly resulting from the conservation reserve; however, the conservation reserve is known to have significant social value to the local community. Many members of the local community regularly spend time within the conservation reserve.

Monarch Point Conservation Reserve is part of a larger multi-agency initiative to protect lands along the southern shore of Prince Edward County. As an important part of this initiative, it contributes to conservation of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems in the area that will benefit both current and future generations.

In general, Prince Edward County is a popular tourism destination, with enjoyment of the natural landscape being a particular draw to the area. Visitors to the County are known to use the conservation reserve, and it is anticipated that the conservation reserve has an economic impact by supporting tourism in the County (e.g., guided nature appreciation and recreation-based activities).

6 Protected area pressures

In line with the purpose and objectives of the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*, Monarch Point Conservation Reserve was established to protect the natural and cultural values of the area, while providing opportunities for land uses that are ecologically sustainable. Pressures are natural or human-caused disturbances that impact those values. MECP is undertaking work to identify potential pressures on the values of the conservation reserve, which will be considered in the management planning process.

Existing pressures with a known or potential impact on natural and cultural values of the conservation reserve include, but are not limited to:

- invasive species
- fragmentation (e.g., roads, trails)
- physical pollution (e.g., littering, dumping)
- unauthorized and/or intensive historic and current human use (e.g., unauthorized camping, unauthorized off-trail motorized vehicle use, intensive on-trail motorized vehicle use, intensive historical military uses and associated legacy effects)
- vandalism

These pressures have resulted in erosion, compaction, rutting and unauthorized expansion of roads and trails, and vegetation and habitat damage and loss.

7 Management considerations

The following is a preliminary list of some key considerations that may be addressed through the management planning process. Additional considerations may be identified in subsequent stages of the process and not all management considerations are

specifically identified in this document. This section does not specify how these considerations might be addressed, as this will be identified in subsequent stages of the planning process.

7.1 Zoning

Conservation reserves may be divided into zones, such as access and natural environment zones, which have different management intent based on the sensitivity of natural and cultural values and potential for recreational and land uses. Zoning allows for different policies to be applied to each type of zone to ensure the areas are managed appropriately.

Zoning may be appropriate for Monarch Point Conservation reserve, to provide protection for areas of the conservation reserve that are particularly sensitive to pressures. Zoning could help to guide management of activities in these most sensitive areas and help to ensure that significant values are not compromised by high intensity use.

7.2 Access and use

Some areas of the conservation reserve experience concentrated and intensive use, particularly at peak times of the year (e.g., summer weekends). Often, the most intensive use occurs in areas that are more easily accessed, particularly when they can be accessed by motorized vehicles. This can lead to crowding, access issues, and an increased footprint of use.

In areas where there is particularly high use and a variety of different activities occurring, there is increased potential for user conflicts and pressure on conservation reserve values. Where impacts are significant, subsequent stages of management planning will consider potential management options and/or preferred policies to address the pressures. Restrictions on use (e.g., timing, closure of trails) may also be implemented as part of operational management of the conservation reserve.

7.3 Roads and Trails

There is an extensive network of pre-existing roads and trails throughout the conservation reserve that evolved over time. Due to the extensiveness of this road and trail network, some trails overlap with significant natural and cultural heritage values. To support well-informed consideration of roads and trails throughout the management planning process, MECP is continuing to gather information on road and trail attributes, such as their locations, condition, types of uses, and level of use.

7.4 Landscape context

While management plan policies will apply only to land that is within the boundary of Monarch Point Conservation Reserve, it is important to consider the broader landscape context in planning and management of the conservation reserve. The conservation reserve plays an important role in protecting natural features and ecosystems that extend beyond its boundaries across the broader landscape. We recognize that the conservation reserve is one of several other types of protected spaces along the south shore of Prince Edward County and that there is a multi-stakeholder initiative to protect lands and waters in this area. Initiatives that cross the broader landscape, such as a stakeholder proposal to establish a footpath route crossing the south shore of Prince Edward County, will be considered during the management planning process.

8 References

Please note that this reference list is not exhaustive. Additional resources, including personal communications, may provide further background information and perspectives.

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