

County Forestry Services 2023 Update



- a) County Forest Management
- b) Woodlands Conservation By-law
- c) Weed Control Act
- d) Support Services

County Forest Management



County Forest Context



- The County-owned Forest consists of 1040 hectares (2500 acres) within 27 tracts:
- The Banks Tract
- Big Swamp Tract
- Skunk's Misery / Bothwell Forest Complex
 - one of the largest and most significant remaining forest blocks in south-western Ontario
 - many rare and unique species that are uncommon elsewhere in Ontario

County Forest Background



- The Forest was acquired between 1945 and 1983, with most purchased in the 1960s, under the Woodlands Improvement Act using Provincial grants
- The management operations recognize the environmental importance of the Forest, are cautious when dealing with matters such as Species at Risk legislation and serve to be an example for private land owners
- The management operations will, over the long term, improve the forest and provide a long term ecological and financial benefit

County Forest Vision



The Middlesex County Forests will be managed to ensure the ecological sustainability of the Middlesex County Forests and their associated natural heritage features and social and economic values through the utilization of an integrated ecosystem-based approach to management.

County Forest Timber Harvest

- Select conifer (white pine) harvests have now been completed in the Patterson and Purdy Tracts.
- A conifer thinning harvest has been tendered for the McMaster and Bayne Tracts



County Forest Public Use



- Hunting season (no major issues; tree stand policy)
- Trail use (horseback, hiking, mountain biking) popular during summer months
- Education and research activities continue (Chestnut, SAR, Bird studies)
- Garbage (cleanup and installation of barriers continue)



County Forest Misuse Continues



Municipal Drain Clean Out



Ecology – Birds Canada



© Trisha Snider



Ecology Cont'd – Birds Canada



© Trisha Snider



Mark Brown RPI
Middlesex County
399 R d'aur Street N,
London, ON N6A 2P1

March 15, 2023

Dear Mark,

I am writing to share our findings from our 2022 forest bird surveys in Middlesex County. Every year, our team at Birds Canada surveys public and private woodlots across southwestern Ontario to monitor forest bird populations, with a focus on species at risk.

We've surveyed Skunk's Misery for forest birds at risk for several years; we make a point to survey here annually because Skunk's Misery is home to significant populations of some of Canada's rarest and most at-risk birds. Skunk's Misery is one of three strongholds for Prothonotary Warblers, a species which is Endangered in Ontario and Canada. The current Prothonotary Warbler population in Canada—all contained within southwestern Ontario—is estimated to be less than 40 individuals. However, our surveys indicate that Skunk's Misery hosts at least 25% of the Prothonotary Warbler population in Ontario, and in 2022 yielded at least 21 fledglings. Skunk's Misery also supports other species at risk, including Acadian Flycatchers, Wood Thrushes, Eastern Wood Pewees, and Carolina Warblers (the latter of which is extremely rare in the Carolinian region of Ontario due to the loss of its preferred habitat of old-growth forest). Other species that have been documented breeding in Skunk's Misery (some of which are uncommon in Ontario and require larger tracts of forest) include Yellow-throated Vireo, Hooded Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Brown Creeper, White Woodpecker, Swamp Sparrow, Wood Duck, Green Heron, Scarlet Tanager, and Veery, among many others.

In 2022, we also surveyed County Line Woods, as well as three Middlesex County woodlots we had not surveyed before: Clark, Steele, and Robinson Tracts. We knew that County Line Woods supports several Acadian Flycatchers (which are Endangered in Ontario and Canada) but weren't sure what to expect for the other three woodlots. We were happy to see the diversity of birds (again, including species that are uncommon in Ontario and those that require larger forest tracts) and the number of species at risk, including a Prothonotary Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, Carolina Warblers, and a Red-headed Woodpecker, four of our five target species; there are very

National Headquarters/Administration Centrale
P.O. Box/C.P. 160, 115 Front Road, Port Rowan, ON Canada N0E 1M0
1-888-448-2473 | BIRDSCANADA.ORG

Charitable Registration No./No. d'enregistrement de bienfaisance 11902 4313 RR0001



Forest Research

- Growth and yield plots
- New silviculture practice trials are ongoing (OMNRF)
- Chestnut tree inventory and health monitoring. (UoG)
- Forest pests monitoring with CFIA
- SAR habitat protection and monitoring



Woodlands Conservation By-law



Woodlands Conservation By-law

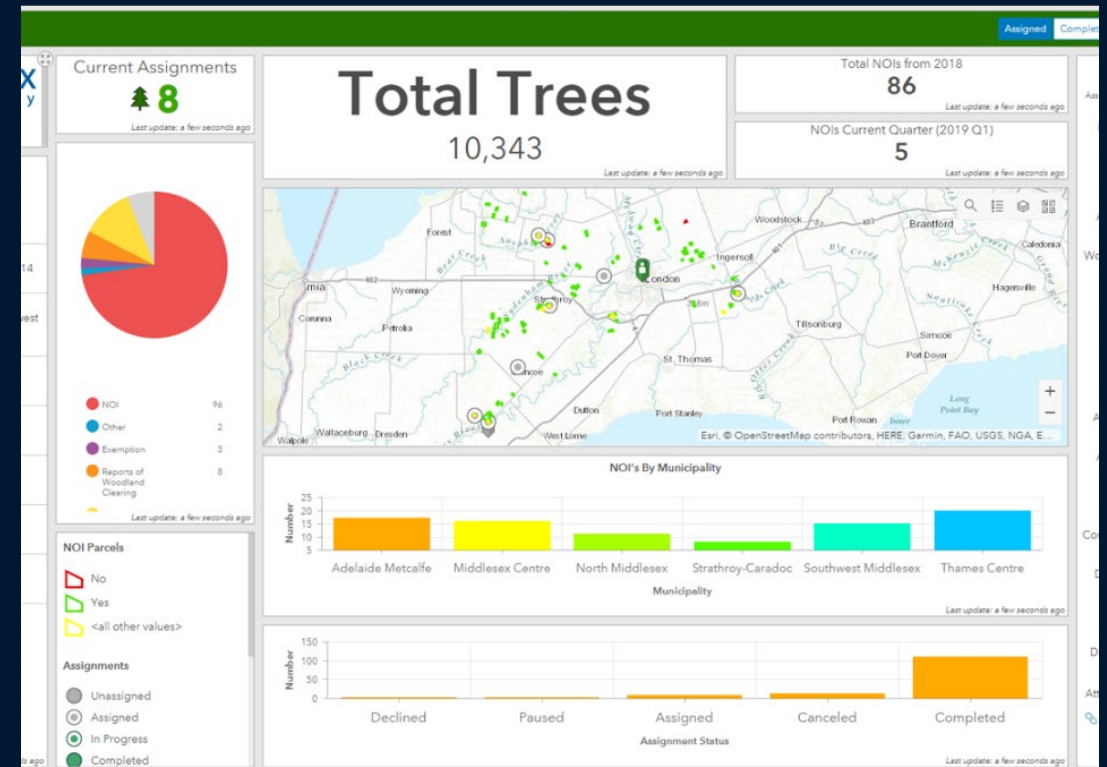


- Historically Southern Ontario was largely deforested for timber / potash production and cleared for agriculture
- Many complex and inter-related environmental, socio-economic, and cultural benefits of woodlands
- Woodlands Conservation By-laws are passed under the Municipal Act to 'prohibit or regulate the destruction or injuring of trees' on private property
- No person may injure or destroy living trees within regulated woodlands unless it is done in accordance with: Good Forestry, or Circumference Limit, or as a result of an 'exemption'

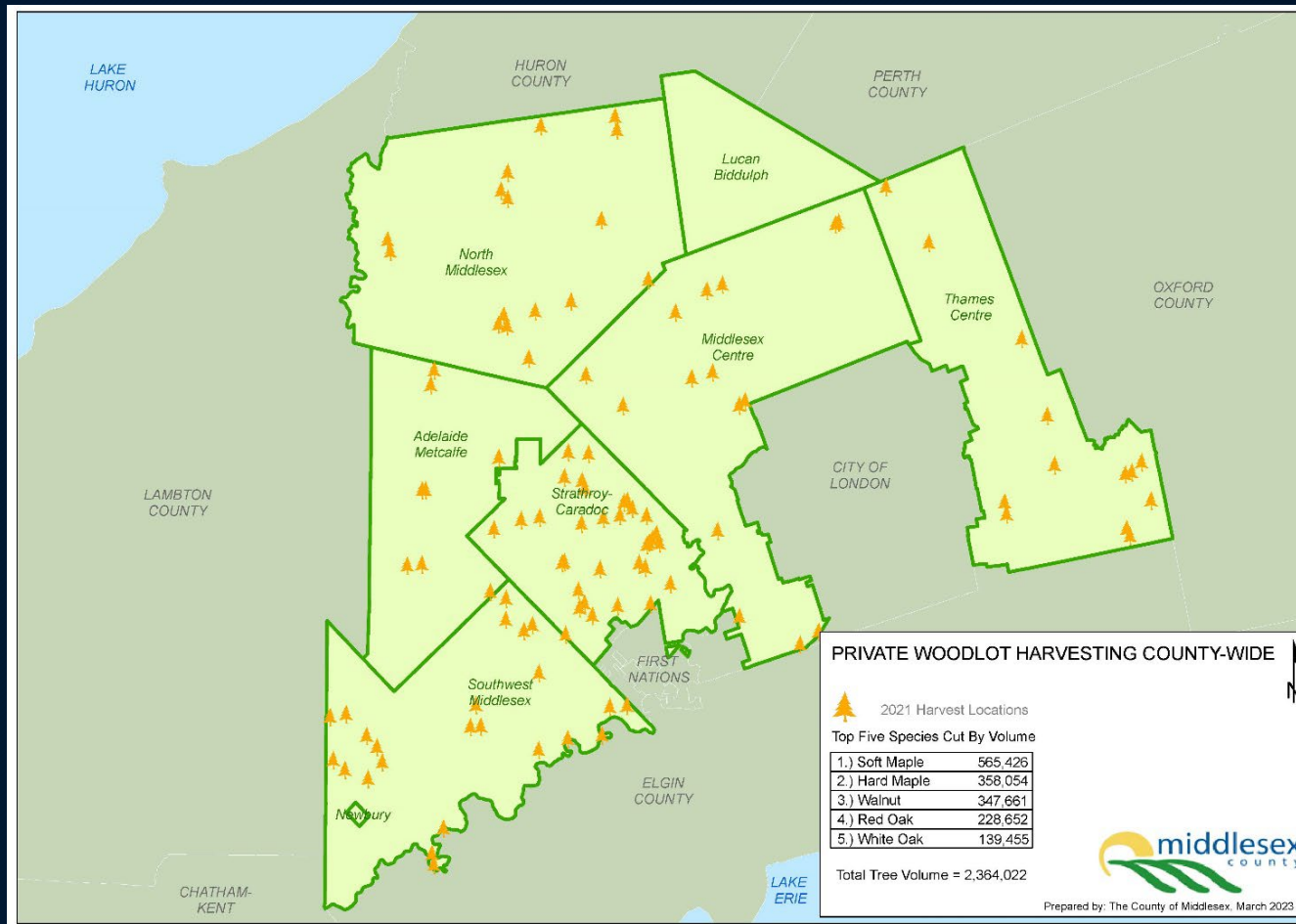
Woodlands Conservation By-law



- All tasks are uploaded to phone “Workforce daily task list” by admin staff
- Field reviews are conducted adding photos and notes which are uploaded in the field
- Admin staff mail-out letters and MWB telephones landowners to confirm findings
- Central database available to admin and management

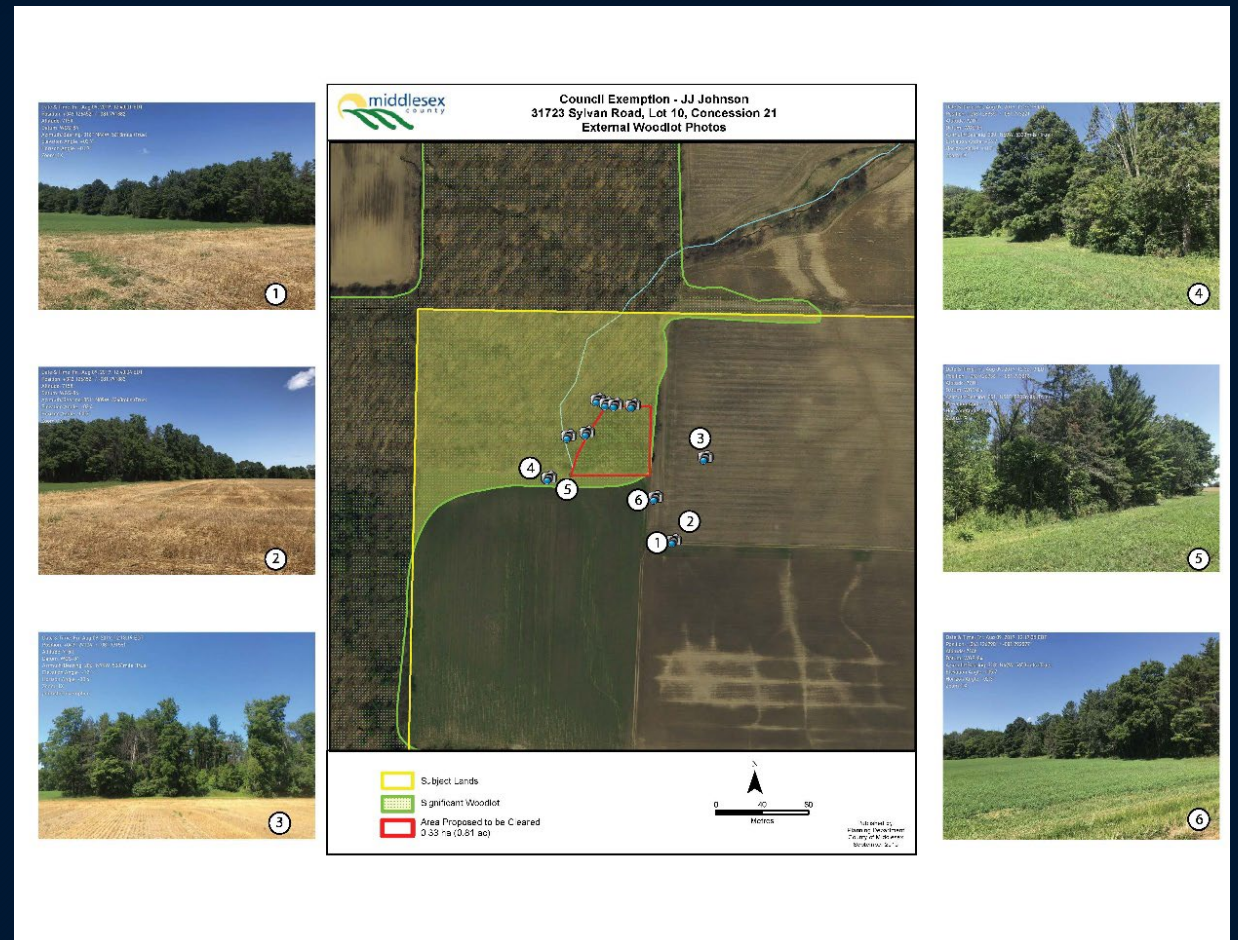


County Wide 2022 Harvest Summary



Woodlands Conservation By-law - Exemptions

- Landowners continue to apply for County Council exemptions to clear small areas of woodland to improve cash cropping operational efficiencies
- Replanting an equivalent area is required and usually contracted to the local CA



Woodland Conservation By-Law Enforcement



- While most landowners and the logging industry comply with the By-law, there are some cases where enforcement is necessary
- The County continues to prosecute as necessary and the County Solicitor's Office is experienced in this specialized area
- The County seeks court ordered replanting of the area cleared, registered on title, prohibition order and fine



Weed Control Act



Weed Control Act



The Weed Act provides for Counties to appoint 'Area Weed Inspectors' and municipalities to appoint 'Municipal Weed Inspectors'

Within Middlesex, the County's Area Weed Inspector is also appointed by each local municipality to be the Municipal Weed Inspector

Having one Inspector has been seen as an 'economy of scale'

Responding primarily to complaints, the Weed Inspector works with landowners and staff from local municipalities and other agencies to address weed issues

A flexible enforcement model, first speaking to landowners to encourage compliance (which works 95% of the time) and then utilizing the authority of the Weed Act when necessary

Weed Control Act

- Medium volume of complaints in 2022
- All issues were satisfactorily resolved
- Trial Phragmites treatments
- Two challenging years for landowners where seasonal weather has affected weed management efficacy in cash crops



Support Services



Support Services



The Woodlands Conservation Officer is a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) and is available for assistance including:

- Planning Files
- Municipal tree issues
- Regulatory compliance inspections
- As a general Q & A resource

Woodlands Officer was the County's lead on the Clean Water Program



Invasive Pests

- Forestry services liaise and cooperate with senior government agencies NRCAN, CFIA, OMNRF and provide landowners with options for implementing control strategies and BMP's
- Continually updating our web resources



Questions



Mark Brown
mbrown@middlesex.ca

Durk Vanderwerff
dvanderwerff@middlesex.ca