

## **Invitation to Comment: Crown Land Use Planning**

The **Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry** invites your comments on the Crown Land Use Planning process for the following three Crown land properties:

- Aylmer Wildlife Management Area
- Fingal Wildlife Management Area
- Calton Swamp Wildlife Management Area

The Ministry is seeking your input to confirm whether the land use intent and policies for the three Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) remain current, relevant, and effective in guiding the uses and activities of these properties.

The information and maps below have been included to better inform your understanding of the Crown Land Use Planning process.

### **Crown Land Use Planning and Policy**

Crown land use policy outlines where and under what conditions activities can occur on Crown lands and waters managed under the *Public Lands Act* in Ontario. Land use policy is developed and updated through Crown land use planning, a process where the Ministry works in consultation with Indigenous communities, other provincial ministries, stakeholders and the public. The [Guide for Crown Land Use Planning](#) provides policy and process direction for Crown land use planning. Part of the planning cycle includes assessment to determine if the land use policies that were adopted are still appropriate, or whether further review is required. Through this invitation to comment, the Ministry is seeking input on the current land use policies for the three sites to inform whether further review is needed.

For more information, visit: [Ontario.ca/page/crown-land-planning](https://ontario.ca/page/crown-land-planning)

### **Crown Land Use Policy Atlas**

[Crown Land Use Policy Atlas](#) (CLUPA) is an online tool that contains area-specific land use policy for Crown lands in the form of maps and corresponding policy reports. As the authoritative source for Crown land use policy in the province, CLUPA also provides a platform to document updates to land use policy.

Policy reports reflect a consolidation of existing Crown land use policy from a variety of sources for a specific piece of geography. The information provided in a policy report includes:

- Area name
- Land use designation
- Location information (district, area, etc.)
- Description
- Land use intent
- List of permitted uses and guidelines
- Sources of direction

The land use designation and land use intent provide the broader land and resource use context and may communicate specific objectives that should be emphasized or prioritized in decision making. Permitted uses and activities are included in a standard table format, indicated by a “Yes” or “No”, and outline any additional guidelines to inform management of these uses. All decisions about the management and allocation of land and natural resources must be consistent with applicable land use intent and policies.

For more information, visit: [Ontario.ca/page/crown-land-use-policy-atlas](https://ontario.ca/page/crown-land-use-policy-atlas)

### **Aylmer, Fingal and Calton Swamp Wildlife Management Areas**

The **Aylmer WMA** (209 hectares) is located four (4) kilometers northeast of the Town of Aylmer, in the Township of Malahide, Elgin County. Upon acquisition of the property from the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1962, it was restored to provide habitat for waterfowl, shore birds, songbirds and game birds. The property contains a Provincially Significant Wetland and is recognized as a federally designated Important Bird Area. In Aylmer WMA, 44 hectares of land is farmed using a crop rotation of corn, soybean and winter wheat. The Ontario Police College occupies part of the property and is not included within the provincial wildlife area boundary.

The **Fingal WMA** (292 hectares) is located east of the City of St. Thomas, in the Municipality of Southwold in the County of Elgin. This property was acquired from the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1965 and opened for public hunting of upland game birds. The property contains hiking trails through forests, grasslands and wetlands as well as a picnic area and a small viewing tower overlooking a wetland and tallgrass prairie habitat. In Fingal WMA, 158 hectares of land is farmed using a crop rotation of corn, soybean and winter wheat.

The **Calton Swamp WMA** (41 hectares) is located southeast of the Town of Aylmer in Malahide Township, Elgin County. Calton Swamp is a mix of wetlands, deciduous forest and a pine plantation that supports a diverse mix of wildlife species. Calton Swamp contains a Provincially Significant Wetland that provides waterfowl and marsh bird migratory and breeding habitats. The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority own 43 hectares of adjacent lands that are managed in association with the parcels managed by the Ministry.

The Elgin Stewardship Council and its many volunteers support the management of the three WMAs and Ducks Unlimited Canada provides wetland management conservation support at Aylmer and Calton Swamp.

Policy reports for the three WMAs can be found on CLUPA at the links below:

[Aylmer Wildlife Management Area](#)

[Calton Swamp Wildlife Management Area](#)

[Fingal Wildlife Management Area](#)

## **Land Use Intent**

Aylmer, Fingal and Calton Swamp WMAs are designated as Provincial Wildlife Areas, which are areas specifically managed for wildlife and to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, particularly hunting and wildlife viewing.

A summary of the land use intent for Aylmer, Fingal and Calton Swamp WMAs is to:

- Protect and enhance wildlife and their habitat, with an emphasis on game species, such as migratory waterfowl and upland game,
- Facilitate no-fee, day-use, wildlife-related recreational activities,
- Permit other activities when they are wildlife-oriented and compatible, and
- In Aylmer and Fingal, to act as a demonstration site of wildlife management on farmland.

## **Permitted Uses**

Some of the permitted uses in Aylmer, Fingal and Calton Swamp WMAs are Crown land recreation, which includes hunting, hiking, scientific research, environmental education, and nature appreciation. Many uses are permitted only if there is a valid case the activity is wildlife-oriented or compatible.

Crown Land Disposition is a permitted use in Aylmer and Fingal. Disposition means the granting of property rights (e.g., freehold or leasehold title) or personal rights (e.g., land use permit, licence of occupation) to Crown lands. For acquired lands, such as Aylmer and Fingal, the Ministry manages the lands through issuance of land use permits, which permit occupancy of Crown lands for a stated purpose. The guideline for the Crown Land Disposition permitted use states that a valid case must be made that the activity is wildlife oriented or compatible. Disposition of a maximum 50 hectares for agriculture is permitted in Aylmer, and a maximum of 165 hectares for agriculture is permitted in Fingal; wildlife stewardship should be demonstrated with agricultural management practices. Crown Land Disposition is not permitted in Calton Swamp, unless there is a valid case the activity is wildlife-oriented or compatible.

## **What is a Demonstration Site of Wildlife Management on Farmland?**

Wildlife habitat may be described as the combination of land-type, vegetation, and climate conditions that a species needs for food, shelter, and reproduction. Agricultural land provides important habitat for some wildlife species.

Some examples of farmland practices that benefit wildlife include creating buffer strips, fence rows and windbreaks. Adding valuable habitat, through grasslands, wetlands, riparian buffers, forest cover and pollinator habitat provides excellent wildlife benefits. Thoughtful selection and rotations of specific crops, conservation tillage, cover crops and delaying haying are another effective way that benefits both the environment and the farm itself. These benefits include improving soil health, reducing erosion and decreasing the need for pest and disease control.

For more information, visit: [Ontario.ca/page/creating-wildlife-habitat](https://ontario.ca/page/creating-wildlife-habitat).

## Discussion Questions

The following topics and questions are being considered in this planning process:

### Land Use Intent

1. Does the land use intent (managed for wildlife and to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation) capture how the three WMAs should be used and managed?
  - a) If yes, what parts best describe your interest?
  - b) If no, what changes would you suggest? Is there something missing?

### Permitted Uses

2. Do permitted uses in the three WMAs reflect the land use intent (managed for wildlife and to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation)?
  - a) If yes, which of the permitted uses best reflect how you use or would like to use these areas?
  - b) If not, what changes would you suggest? Is there a wildlife-oriented activity that should be permitted or is unclear in the CLUPA policy reports?

### Agriculture for Wildlife

3. Should the Crown lands in the Aylmer and Fingal WMAs continue to be managed as farmland for the purpose of wildlife management (i.e., wildlife-friendly farming practices)?
  - a) If yes, are changes or clarifications to the current guidelines needed? If so, what would you like to see?
  - b) If no, what changes would you suggest?
4. Do you have additional suggestions on:
  - a) Managing these Crown lands?
  - b) Helping with our assessment of the land use policies?

## How to Get Involved

You are invited to provide comments on the above questions for a period of forty-five (45) days. **Comments will be accepted until October 4, 2021.** For further information and to submit comments, please contact:

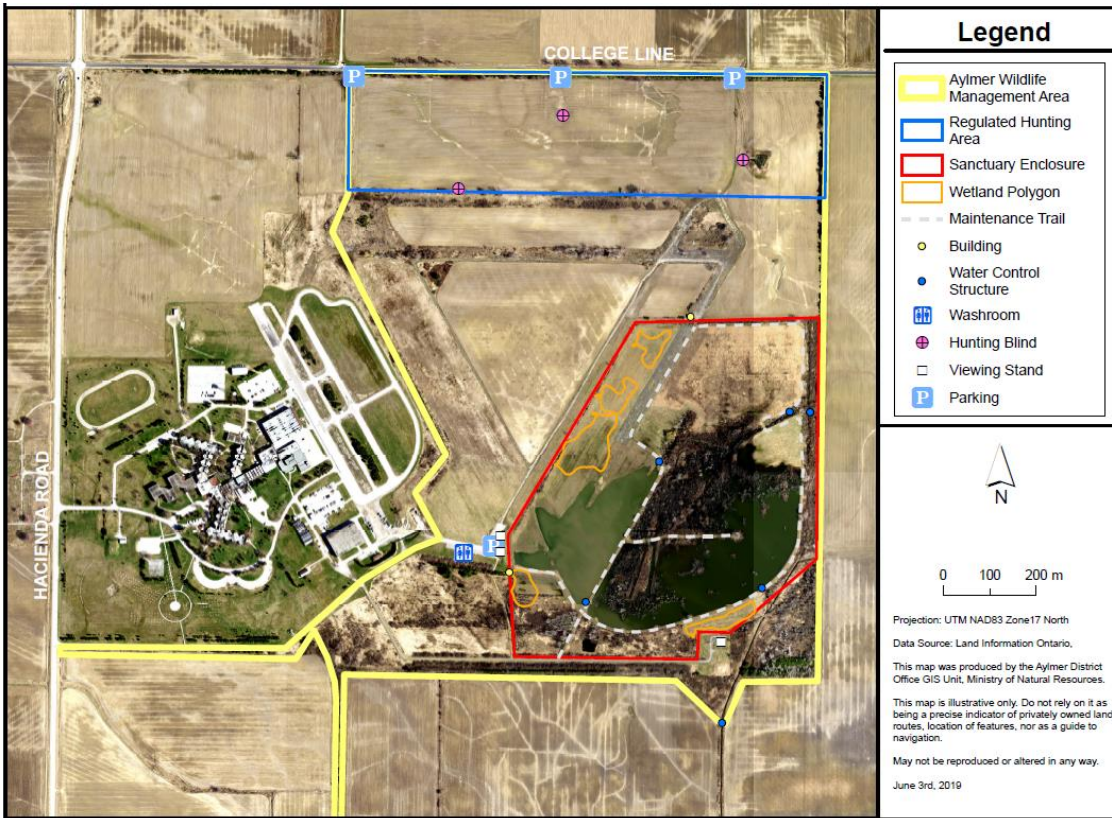
Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry  
Regional Operations Division, Aylmer District  
615 John Street North, Aylmer ON N5H 2S8  
Tel: 519-773-9241 / Email: MNRF.AYL@ontario.ca

### **What's Next?**

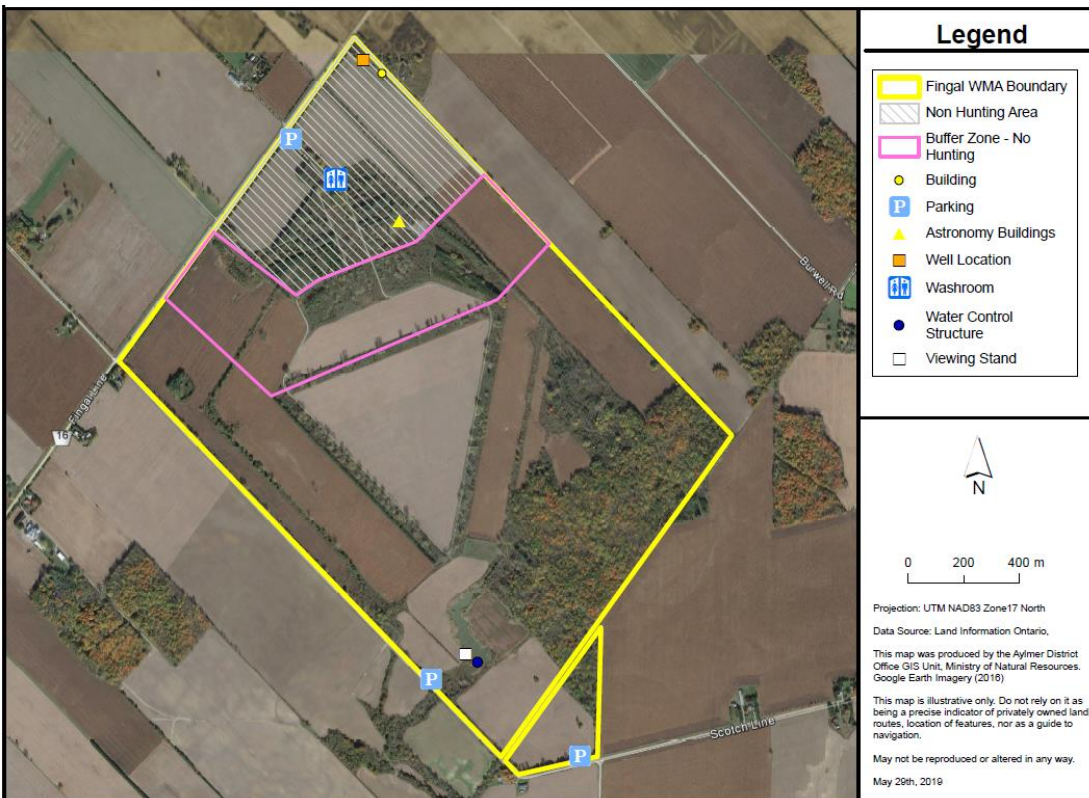
We appreciate your participation in this planning process. All comments received will be considered. No changes to the Wildlife Management Areas are proposed at this time. Minor or major proposals to amend Crown land use policy would require further public and Indigenous review with an opportunity for submission of comments, in accordance with the Guide for Crown Land Use Planning.

*Comments and personal information regarding this planning process are collected under the authority of the Public Lands Act to assist in making decisions. Comments and opinions which do not constitute personal information as defined by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, will be shared among NDMNRF and others as appropriate, and may be included in study documentation that is made available for public review. Personal information will remain confidential unless prior consent to disclose is obtained.*

# Aylmer Wildlife Management Area



# Fingal Wildlife Management Area



# Calton Swamp Wildlife Management Area

