

Appendix 3C

SITE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

September 12, 1996

Revised February 2000

PREAMBLE

The Rideau Waterway Land Trust Foundation Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the inherent values of the Rideau Corridor for future generations. In its mandate, there are three areas of interest. In its incorporation documents, RWLT has stated interest in lands of natural, historic, or aesthetic value, which occur within the geographic area of the Rideau Canal and the Tay Canal, collectively known as the Rideau Corridor or Rideau Waterway.

This system recognizes that shoreline lands are key components of ecosystems that are both land and water based. These lands provide habitat for many species of plants and animals. At the same time, they form the basis of an important historical and recreational corridor, thereby providing social benefit and financial benefit from tourism. A mosaic of shoreline uses, including permanent homes, cottages, and farms are evident within this corridor. Shoreline lands serve as drainage areas for the waterway itself, and thus different uses can affect water runoff. Groundwater recharge can also be affected by land use. Many unique and distinct land features are also located within the Rideau Corridor.

The RWLT will employ a variety of means to preserve natural, aesthetic, or historic values for the future. These means will range from working with other organizations to encourage effective stewardship of private lands to outright purchase of significant properties. In view of the variety of parcels of land within the area of interest, and the need for an effective yet efficient program of land protection, a means of determining priorities is essential. For this reason, the RWLT has developed a list of criteria for each of the three areas of interest. The RWLT initially planned to produce a numerical scoring system for ranking lands of interest, however, the inflexible nature of such a system and the problems of equivalence of scoring between the three areas of interest, has led to the adoption of a hierarchical grouping of criteria. Essential qualities appear at the top of each list, followed by desirable qualities, and then advantageous qualities at the bottom. As a corollary to these, there is an additional list of undesirable or unacceptable qualities that may exclude a property from further consideration.

This list of criteria is intended as a guide to enable comparative assessment of sites. Within a specific area of interest (natural, aesthetic or historic), candidate properties must exhibit significant qualities at the top of a list to receive further consideration. In the event that properties exhibit significant qualities in two or more areas of interest, these properties will be ranked as top priority. RWLT will endeavour to preserve properties that represent the three areas of interest. Of necessity, considerable discussion will revolve around comparative values across areas of interest.

It is important to note that this is a “living document” which will be fine-tuned by exposure to actual properties and sites.

CRITERIA

Rideau Waterway Land Trust has established Criteria to be used as a guideline for evaluating candidate properties for land protection. The Criteria have been categorized into the following separate tables:

Natural Value
Aesthetic Value
Historic Value
External Influences
Adverse Conditions

The first three tables reflect RWLT’s Mandate. They list Criteria indicative of natural, aesthetic and historic values. The fourth table lists external influences. These are positive factors particular to a property, which may make acquisition/protection more favourable due to financing, location, or potential. The fifth table lists several different types of adverse criteria or conditions, which may negatively influence the Land Trust’s decision to become involved with property acquisition.

DIVISION OF CRITERIA WITHIN TABLES

The Criteria listed in each of the tables below have been divided into three categories for quick reference. They are defined as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1° (primary) / essential | These are the most important qualities fundamental to the Mandate of RWLT. |
| 2° (secondary) / desirable | These are all important qualities which add to the “value” of the property, making it more desirable to the Land Trust. |
| 3° (tertiary) / advantageous | It would be advantageous for a property to have these extra qualities. |

CANDIDATE PROPERTY DECISION PROCESS

The decision making process for evaluating properties for protection and acquisition shall be threefold:

- Property evaluation and recommendation
- Determine financial implication
- Board Decision

1. ASSESSMENT

Evaluation of potential acquisitions by the Property Committee will be based on the site assessment. To be considered as a priority project, a property must have at least one primary / essential quality and no overriding adverse qualities. Wherever possible, criteria are based on fact. A recommendation will be prepared by the Committee for consideration by the Board of Directors.

2. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Any recommendation for action regarding a candidate property must first be analysed by the Fundraising Committee and the Treasurer. Initiation of a project may involve short or long-term fundraising/or search for services of donations-in-kind. It is mandatory that the RWLT feels confident that the financial resources to pursue any acquisition can be made available. A recommendation will be prepared for consideration by the Board of Directors.

3. BOARD CONSIDERATION

The Board of Directors will consider the recommendations of the Property and Fundraising Committees and the Treasurer. Because there is the potential for evaluations based only on an initial assessment to overlook unique characteristics and subtle differences between properties, the results of the criteria evaluation will be reviewed by the Land Trust Board. There may be several candidate sites available for acquisition, therefore, the Board would have to balance the results of the evaluation with qualitative comparisons based on personal knowledge. This technical evaluation will be made in conjunction with a review of the financial implications of the acquisition. The respective Committees and staff will then implement the Board's decision.

PROPERTY:			
SIZE & DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY:			
Special conditions of access:			
BUILDINGS PRESENT:			
LEGAL DESCRIPTION:			
OWNER / CONTACT NAME:		Phone:	
MAILING ADDRESS:			
EVALUATION SUMMARY			
Assessment by:		Date of Assessment:	
VALUE	TOTAL VALUE SCORE # (checkmark) YES		
	1°	2°	3°
NATURAL			
AESTHETIC			
HISTORIC			
EXTERNAL INFLUENCE			
TOTAL EVALUATION SCORES			
ADVERSE CONDITIONS:			
SUGGESTED MANAGEMENT / BEST USE OF PROPERTY:			

NOTE: Significant comments and additional property details may be listed on the reverse.

ADDITIONAL PROPERTY INFORMATION:

NATURAL VALUE			
#	SPECIFIC QUALITY	YES (check)	
N1° 1	Provincially Significant Wetland – (Class 1, 2 or 3 wetland) (if yes – check and go to # N1° 7, because #2-6 are likely already included in Class 1, 2 or 3)		
N1° 2	Natural unaltered shoreline		
N1° 3	Known good fish/wildlife habitat; eg. adjacent spawning beds, beaver/muskrat lodge, moose feeding area, deer yard, etc.		
N1° 4	Known breeding, staging, or nesting sites; particularly of rare, threatened, or endangered species		
N1° 5	Mouth of creek or river; junction of aquatic habitats		
N1° 6	Important hydrological area – recharge / discharge area		
N1° 7	ANSI, or part of an “Area of Natural and Scientific Interest”		
N1° 8	Important geological interest; eg. Syncline, outcrop, blend, unconformity, fossils, etc.		
N1° 9	Unique biome; eg. mature forest, old forest, locally rare plants, etc. (size: _____)		
N2° 1	Class 4 or 5 Wetland – Regionally significant		
N2° 2	Partial wetland / wetland < 5 acres in size		
N2° 3	Frontage along narrow channel of waterway		
N2° 4	Connectivity; eg. part of a corridor link between quality or diminishing habitats		
N2° 5	Local presence of rare / uncommon / unusual species		
N2° 6	Mix of habitat / edge / high biotic diversity		
N2° 7	Representative biome or habitat; quality example, typical of region		
N3° 1	Class 6 or 7 Wetland – Locally significant		
N3° 2	Prime agricultural land, on waterfront; possibility of agricultural lease		
N3° 3	Managed forest, on waterfront; possibility of harvest agreement		
NATURAL VALUE – TOTAL SCORES		1°	2°
			3°

AESTHETIC VALUE				
#	SPECIFIC QUALITY			YES (check)
A1° 1	Highly visible: site is at, or immediately adjacent a visited / traffic area, a junction of waterways, near an island, or a lockstation			
A1° 2	Site has visual interest and can be seen from a lockstation (even if distant)			
A1° 3	Unique / distinct landscape; eg. outcrop, bluff, bay, point of land at water level, high hill with “distinct feature”, sandy beach waterfront, rocky shoreline, etc.			
A1° 4	Viewscape / wide-angled view; eg. property on a point of land			
A2° 1	Viewscape related to time and distance from which a property can be seen; eg. lake location, where property can be seen for a long time and distance as one approaches from either direction by boat			
A2° 2	Landscape which provides seasonal appeal; eg. flowers, leaf colour, etc.			
A2° 3	Aesthetic “man-made” feature / development; eg. building, marina, etc. which blends with the surrounding landscape (as opposed to being an “eyesore”)			
A2° 4	Harmony of neighbouring uses; eg. no stark contrasts, conflicts of use / appearance, no intrusive visual objects / noise; eg. traffic, development, excessive or disturbing human uses			
A3° 1	Remnant of “wild” frontage in developed / developing area			
A3° 2	Representative of local land use; eg. well-managed farmland, riparian buffer zone, etc.			
AESTHETIC VALUE – TOTAL SCORES		1°	2°	3°

HISTORIC VALUE			
#	SPECIFIC QUALITY	YES (check)	
H1° 1	LACAC designation / historical society / Parks Canada, etc. documentation of significant building or site		
H1° 2	Significant age; eg. property or original structure dating back to canal building, or predating the canal		
H1° 3	Building or site located at, or adjacent a lockstation		
H1° 4	Restored historical building; period piece		
H1° 5	Site of historic significance; eg. military, trade route, steamboat docking, etc.		
H2° 1	Archaeological site / ruin / artifacts		
H2° 2	Native heritage significance		
H2° 3	Signature building; archetypal / epitome of area of locality		
H3° 1	Century farm		
H3° 2	Location; part of cluster of like architecture / near other historic buildings or locations / solitary		
H3° 3	High visibility		
HISTORIC VALUE – TOTAL SCORES		1°	2°
			3°

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES			
#	SPECIFIC QUALITY		
		YES (check)	
E1° 1	Landowner wishes to donate property		
E1° 2	Land transaction costs would be minimal		
E1° 3	Property is offered with a gift of funds adequate to cover maintenance and/or stewardship costs		
E1° 4	No land taxes – rebate program applicable		
E1° 5	Municipal zoning favourable for land protection at this site		
E2° 1	Land taxes reasonably low		
E2° 2	No immediate maintenance or restoration required		
E2° 3	Offer of “Partnership” to acquire property; eg. may be shared costs, or agreement to manage after acquisition, etc.		
E2° 4	Land at risk of being developed if not conserved		
E2° 5	Acquisition would be a “representative parcel” from all eligible land types – eg. natural wetland, natural upland, historic building, historic site q/o building, aesthetic natural, aesthetic man-made, etc.		
E2° 6	Property has easy access via road, or highly visible water access – eg. rock shoal, sandy bay, etc.		
E2° 7	Property has features underrepresented in local protected sites (eg. RVCA, etc.) – value in establishing protected land in this area (contributes to sense of broad geographical distribution)		
E2° 8	Project likely to stimulate public funding and support		
E2° 9	Property adjacent another protected site – value in extending land protection		
E2° 10	Property may be part of a connecting linkage – eg. may have the potential to create a “public greenbelt”, buffer zone, or wildlife corridor		
E2° 11	Landowner wishes to donate property for tax receipt, but property would not necessarily meet Criteria; however, it is marketable and an agreement to put it up for sale can be arranged with proceeds to other acquisitions		
E3° 1	Property has recreational potential		
E3° 2	Property has educational / research potential		
E3° 3	Inventory work / scientific study on site / background material		
E3° 4	Neighbouring uses compatible with RWLT interests		
EXTERNAL INFLUENCES – TOTAL SCORES		1°	2°
			3°

CONDITIONS THAT MAY NEGATIVELY INFLUENCE RWLT'S DECISION TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH PROPERTY ACQUISITION

REFERENCE: The following list of Adverse Conditions are taken directly from “Nature Conservancy of Canada” documentation.

ADVERSE CONDITIONS			
#	GENERAL PROPERTY CONDITION	COMMENTS	YES (check)
adg 1	Distressed vegetation, or any areas that are bare for no apparent reason		
adg 2	Unusual odours		
adg 3	Stains (unusual or around areas where chemicals are stored / used)		
adg 4	Evidence of dumping		
adg 5	Trash or other debris		
adg 6	Drains		
adg 7	Any unusual depression or mounds		
adg 8	Any sheens or unusual colours on the surface of any water bodies		
adg 9	Piping / vents for underground storage tanks		
adg 10	Ditches, pits, ponds, lagoons, clarifiers, oil / water separators, surface impoundments, or sumps on the property		
#	STORAGE DRUMS	COMMENTS	YES (check)
ads 1	Are there any storage drums on the property		
ads 2	How many		
ads 3	Are they empty		
ads 4	What is / was in the drums		
ads 5	Any evidence of leaking		
ads 6	Will the drums need to be removed		
ads 7	Describe the area around the drums		

#	WELLS / TANKS	COMMENTS	YES (check)
adw 1	Are there, or were there any above or below ground storage tanks on the property		
adw 2	Is the tank above ground, or underground; age; size		
adw 3	What was / is stored in the tank		
adw 4	Is the tank still there – if not, what are details on removal		
adw 5	Have any permits been obtained for the tank (review)		
adw 6	Has the tank and associated piping ever been tested (include results)		
adw 7	Describe the area around the tanks; identify any evidence of leaking or spilling		
adw 8	Does the property contain any SEPTIC tanks or fields		
adw 9	Are they in use or abandoned		
adw 10	Did they receive any industrial materials – discuss		
adw 11	Are there any WELLS on the property		
adw 12	What type and how used		
adw 13	Wells in use or abandoned		
adw 14	Wells locked or protected		
adw 15	Has well water ever been tested – attach results		
adw 16	Have there been any complaints about the quality of the water or flow rate (discuss)		

#	TRANSFORMERS	COMMENTS	YES (check)
adt 1	Are there any transformers located at the property pole-mounted or pad-mounted)		
adt 2	Types of devices and who owns them		
adt 3	Are they labelled as containing PCBs, or being PCB free		
adt 4	Is there any evidence of leaking or damage		
#	MINERAL / PETROLEUM OPERATIONS	COMMENTS	YES (check)
adm 1	Have there ever been any oil or gas wells, or other mining activities on the property		
adm 2	Type of operations on the property		
adm 3	Where were the wastes from such operations disposed of		
adm 4	Are there any oil or gas pipelines		
adm 5	Has the pipeline leaked – details		
adm 6	Identify the owner or operator of any well, mine, or pipeline		
adr 1	Has a RADON test been performed in any building at the property – results		
ada 1	Is there any evidence of materials that are likely to contain ASBESTOS – check roof, exterior, pipe coverings, spray-on fireproofing, cement sheet		
ada 2	Describe types, amounts, and condition of materials (intact or deteriorating)		
adfg 1	Has FILL ever been brought on the property – where was it placed, when and from where did it come		
adfg 2	Has there been any GRADING or disturbance to the soil; why		
TOTAL NUMBER OF ADVERSE CONDITIONS			

REFERENCES

- Creating a Land Preservation Strategy. Gene Duvernoy, Attorney and Engineer, Seattle King County Land Conservancy (WA).
- Creative Conservation. Hilts, Stewart and Ron Reid. Federation of Ontario Naturalists. 1993.
- Criteria for Evaluating Land Protection Proposals. Potawatomi Land Trust
- Introduction to Conservation Easement Stewardship: “Remember Perpetuity is a Very Long Time” the San Juan Preservation Trust. 1994.
- Natural Heritage Evaluation of Muskoka. Reid, Ron and Bonnie Bergsma. Muskoka Heritage Areas Program. February 1994.
- Nature Conservancy of Canada Criteria
- Ontario Wetland Evaluation System, Southern Manual. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. 1993.
- Rideau Canal Management Plan. Canadian Heritage, Parks Canada. 1995.