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TO: Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

DESTINATAIRE : Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales

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FILE NUMBER: ACS2026-SI-CCR-0003

**SUBJECT: 2025 Summary of the Rural Environmental Land Acquisition and
Stewardship Program**

**OBJET: Sommaire 2025 du Programme d'acquisition et de gestion de terres
écologiques rurales**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this communication is to provide Members of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee (ARAC) with a summary of 2025 activities in the Rural Environmental Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program (RELASP) as well as share a Program forecast for 2026.

BACKGROUND

The City's Natural Systems team has been responsible for rural environmental land acquisition since shortly after amalgamation, primarily by responding to landowner requests to purchase or accept their properties for conservation. More recently, the rural environmental land acquisition program's scope and budget was expanded to include stewardship activities. In late 2023, a full-time staff position was allocated to support wetland conservation and to take a more strategic and proactive approach to environmental land acquisition and stewardship, in cooperation with local partners.

In 2025, [Council approved](#) the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Rural Environmental Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program with land acquisition selection criteria to guide and prioritize projects and workplans. The TOR was developed via consultation with partner conservation organizations, input from rural Councillors.

Within the Program, each project is assessed individually, rated against selection criteria, and conducted either singly or in collaboration with local partners involved in similar work. The funds for rural acquisition and stewardship come from the existing Natural Area Acquisition capital budget established by Council for this purpose. Council allocated \$2 million to the Program in the 2025 budget and \$1.8 million in the 2026 budget. Budget allocations were previously overseen by the Environment and Climate Change Committee but was reassigned by Council to the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee under their revised, 2025 Terms of Reference. The Program and budget support Council's strategic priority of a Green and Resilient City.

DISCUSSION

2025 Program Summary

In 2025 the program invested approximately \$3.7 million on conservation property acquisitions and stewardship activities on 955.5 acres (386.7 hectares) of rural environmental lands. These activities leveraged over \$577,000.00 of external funding from local and national conservation partners. In addition, to the value

of partner purchased land acquisitions and/or Ecogifts. Program partners included the South Nation Conservation Authority, the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

The following projects were completed in 2025 and can be located on the attached Map:

- City Property Purchases (total of 332 acres)
 - A. Ferry Road: 222 ac
 - B. Mississippi River: 28 ac
 - C. Springhill Road: 82 ac
- Partner Property Purchases (total of 472 acres)
 - D. Marlborough Wetland: 225 ac
 - E. Manion Corners Wetland: 247 ac
- Stewardship Projects Funded (total of 151.5 acres)
 - F. Snake Island Forest: 100 ac
 - G. Navan Forest: 50 ac
 - H. Leitrim Wetland: 1.5 ac

City staff have conducted field surveys and evaluations on all three new acquisitions in preparation for the development of detailed management plans.

Separately, the City also acquired 15.6 acres of environmentally significant urban lands in Kanata Lakes through a combination of fee simple acquisition and an Ecogift.

2026 Program Forecast

In 2026, staff are actively pursuing acquisition and stewardship opportunities on 5 to 8 properties, with a projected expenditure of approximately \$1.5 million. This includes potential fee simple acquisitions, support to conservation partner acquisitions, Ecogifts, and stewardship activities on existing properties across rural Ottawa. Work is underway with Ducks Unlimited Canada, South Nation Conservation, and Mississippi Valley Conservation for 2026 projects.

Staff anticipate that other opportunities and partnership requests will arise throughout the year. All opportunities have or will be evaluated under the Acquisition and Stewardship Program criteria as per the Terms of Reference, including consultation with the ward Councillors.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the report. The acquisitions and stewardship partnerships cost of approximately \$1.5 million planned for 2026 will be funded within the existing budget.

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no asset management implications arising from the recommendation of this report.

Signed: Adriana Hulse, Planner II, Strategic Initiatives Department,

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

