

Restoring Pollinator Habitat on Rights-of-Way Workshop Summary Report—Highlights and What We Heard



Introduction

On February 20, 2020, Canadian Wildlife Federation and Toronto Region Conservation Authority hosted a workshop for Rights-of-Way Managers, native seed suppliers, and environmental non-profit groups.

Seventy-seven people gathered at Black Creek Pioneer Village for a full day workshop on restoring pollinator habitat on Rights-of-Way in Ontario. An additional twelve people joined the workshop via webinar, for a total of eighty-nine participants. The workshop agenda is included in APPENDIX I.

Workshop planning committee members include Carolyn Callaghan (CWF), Holly Bickerton, Katie Turnbull (TRCA), Jennifer Line (CWF), Elizabeth Muckle-Jeffs (Professional Edge), James Page (CWF), and Fallon Hayes (CWF/Canadian Conservation Corps). We are grateful to Environment and Climate Change Canada (Habitat Stewardship Program) and the Government of Ontario (Species at Risk Stewardship Program) for the financial support. The views expressed in the publication are the views of the Recipient and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province.

Speakers:

Keynote: Iris Caldwell, [Rights-of-Way Habitat Working Group](#), Energy Resources Center, University of Chicago
Kathleen Law, [Pollinator Partnership Canada](#)
Corey Wells, Katie Turnbull and Colin Love, [Toronto and Region Conservation Authority](#) (TRCA)
Holly Bickerton
Carolyn Callaghan, [Canadian Wildlife Federation](#) (CWF)
Michelle Vala, [Lanark County](#)
Jake Lozon, [Ontario Nativescape](#)
Stefan Weber, [Ontario Plant Restoration Alliance](#), McMaster University
Mary Gartshore, Pterophylla Native Plants
Karen Horsman, [Toronto and Region Conservation Authority](#) (TRCA)
Nigel Finney, [Conservation Halton](#)
Ashley Fox, [Ontario Power Generation](#)
Leonardo Cabrera, [Rouge National Urban Park](#)

Workshop Summary

This workshop aimed to connect Ontario stakeholders interested in managing Rights-of-way to restore and enhance native meadow habitat for pollinators. A contact list of like-minded people and groups was created for future networking.

Our keynote speaker, Iris Caldwell from the U.S.-based [Rights-of-Way as Habitat Working Group](#) spoke to us about the great strides made over the past five years, connecting over 200 organizations and developing [resource tools](#) for Rights-of-Way managers.

Kathleen Law, of [Pollinator Partnerships Canada](#) presented on the significant decline of pollinators and the impacts of their decline for the environment and our economy as well as the benefits of restoring meadow habitat.

The Toronto Region Conservation Authority team, Corey Wells, Katie Turnbull and Colin Love presented the ambitious [The Meadoway project](#). A 16 km hydro corridor through the heart of Toronto offers a [template](#) for large-scale and ambitious multi-jurisdictional projects.

Holly Bickerton and [CWF's Carolyn Callaghan](#) spoke about partnerships built with eastern Ontario land managers and [test plots](#) established to kick-start large-scale meadow restoration in the region.

Winners of the 2019 Pollinator Roadside Management Award from the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign ([NAPPC](#)), Lanark County's Michelle Vala described how they transitioned their [vegetation management plan](#) to include [pollinator habitat](#)- reducing mowing and spraying while managing for an invasive species. Costs and cost savings were also shared.

Recent restoration efforts in Halton Region (Nigel Finney), on Ontario Power Generation lands (Ashely Fox) and in the new Rouge Urban National Park (Leonardo Cabrera) were also presented.

Seasoned vegetation restoration specialists Mary Gardshore and Jake Lozon spoke of lessons learned from years of successful meadow restoration projects in southern Ontario. Obtaining and amplifying seed, designing site-specific seed mixes and successional changes you can expect were all described. Stefan Weber of McMaster University and Ontario Plant Restoration Alliance presented research examining optimal methods for restoration.

Communications and public outreach are key to the success of restoration projects and Colin Love and Karen Horsman of TRCA's The Meadoway described their multi-pronged approach for communicating and engaging community members to become stewards of these lands.

Breakout Discussion Results

Discussion Questions:

What are three items/conditions necessary to achieve pollinator habitat restoration at large scale?

Individuals were tasked with reflection, followed by table discussion to summarize top three items and report to group. Ten groups participated in the discussion. Table 1 summarizes the items determined to be essential to achieve large-scale restoration.

Table 1. List of Items Necessary to Achieve Large-scale Pollinator Habitat Restoration:

| Item | Number of Groups Listed as Important |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Funding/Support from all levels of government | 6 |
| Public Awareness/Tailored Messaging | 5 |
| Partnerships/Collaboration/Multi-disciplinary teams | 5 |
| Native seed supply (including procurement and forecasting needs) | 4 |
| Technical Expertise/best practices guidance | 3 |
| Policy/Legislation Change/Regulatory Assurance | 2 |
| Public Engagement | 1 |
| Business Cases/Case for Support | 1 |
| Landowner relationship/acceptance | 1 |
| Stakeholder education/staff training | 1 |
| Ex situ Conservation planting (to address native seed diversity) | 1 |

Additional items not included in group priorities but stated by individuals include:

- Pollinator habitat restoration embedded in federal, provincial and municipal strategies and climate change mitigation and adaptation policy.
- Tool sharing and standardization
- Collaboration with landowners, managers, and contractors working as one from the beginning of projects
- Engagement of children in restoration
- Incorporate pollinator habitat restoration into long-term land use planning
- Political leadership
- Building a community of practice
- Funding for procurement of native seeds
- Commitment to Monitoring Pollinators
- Standardized pre and post surveys to evaluate success
- Open access to research results and sharing of lessons

What is important for successful partnership building for pollinator habitat restoration?

The following items were brought up and discussed within the collective group of participants:

- Environmental ENGOs approach municipalities to bring awareness and build a business case for restoration
- Environmental ENGOs get involved in reimagining the public aesthetic of neat, mown lawn on ROW to a more natural look
- Establish global, cross-border partnerships
- Develop a sensibility that this is all-political/non-partisan issue of public interest
- Social license is a significant factor in providing incentive for ROW managers to restore habitat
- There is a need to upscale our education system to include habitat restoration in curriculum
- Building school/youth partnerships is important
- Master gardeners and gardening clubs are an obvious partner
- Include landscape industry
- Transport/Public Works Departments operations staff are important partners. Go to their conferences
- Encourage site tours to improve knowledge, provide inspiration and create a shared experience
- Consider the upcoming R3 conference as an opportunity to keep the conversation going
- Make a concerted effort to connect with potential partners.

Key Messages/Lessons Learned

At the end of the workshop, 33 participants provided completed surveys; participant comments highlighted some take-home messages from this productive day.

1. Pollinators are important for the health of the environment and our economy;
2. ROW restoration can increase biodiversity;
3. Many organizations are already successfully restoring pollinator-friendly meadow habitat and there are opportunities for partnerships;
4. Restoration of ROW is beneficial on any scale, be it pollinator patches (gardens) or kilometres of roadsides or hydro corridors; it's okay to start small;
5. Changes to vegetation management protocols can reduce costs and enhance biodiversity at the same time;
6. The diversity of visual results of restoration was striking; meadows differ from site to site;
7. When beginning a project, site preparation and native seed selection is important;
8. It is essential to obtain community support; community engagement is an integral part of the restoration process;
9. Storytelling about pollinators as well as public workshops and programs build stewardship;
10. Case studies are useful for making the business case to upper management in organizations.

Based on survey results the workshop was positively received (4.4 out of 5) with respect to: providing useful information, increasing awareness of restoration methods, and increasing the likelihood of initiating or continuing restoration projects. If there could have been any improvements on the format of the day, participants felt they could have used more time to network with one another.

Next Steps

Based on the 33 completed surveys we received, here are the top “additional support needs”, ordered from greatest to least number of responses:

1. Financial support
2. Establishing collaborative partnerships with other land managers/owners in my area
3. Technical guidance on native meadow restoration methods
4. Public support or acceptance
5. Technical guidance on native plants species
6. Senior management or political support
7. Communications support
8. Business care support/business case studies
9. Invasive species management technical support
10. Availability of specialized equipment
11. Management support during systems change and early implementation

Most respondents want to continue to receive information on ROW restoration and are interested in participating in working groups and future meetings. The enthusiasm and energy in the room was palpable.

The [Rights-of-Way as Habitat Working Group](#) has five years of collaboration, protocol and tool development to share with interested parties in Canada. We would like to see the development of a Canadian chapter of this group to carry this work forward for greater habitat restoration success.

Acknowledgements

The organizing committee wishes to thank all the speakers for their contributions and time. The caliber of expertise was exceptional. Thanks to Elizabeth Muckle-Jeffs of The Professional Edge for event planning expertise and attending to many details. Venue staff at Black Creek Pioneer Village were very accommodating with preparations and last-minute changes; Peter and Paul caterers provided excellent food. S4 Audio & Visual provided additional IT technical assistance. Thank you to workshop participants for your interest and for bringing energy into the discussion.

Appendix I: Agenda



Workshop: Restoring Pollinator Habitat on Rights-of-Way

AGENDA

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Registration check-in, Refreshments and Networking

10:00 a.m.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

10:10 a.m. - 10:35 a.m.

Keynote Presentation

Making Way for Monarchs (and Other Pollinators): Collaborative Approaches for Habitat on Rights-of-Way in the U.S.
Iris Caldwell, Rights-of-Way Habitat Working Group, Energy Resources Center, University of Illinois at Chicago

10:35 a.m. - 10:50 a.m.

The Role of Rights-of-Way in Habitat Restoration

Green Infrastructure: Addressing Pollinator Declines by Integrating Biodiversity Benefits into Everyday Business
Kathleen Law, Pollinator Partnership Canada

10:50 a.m. - 11:10a.m.

Meeting and Identifying Expertise in the Room

11:10 a.m. - 12:20 p.m.

Case Studies from Urban and Rural Contexts in Ontario

The Meadoway: Planning, Restoration and Stewardship of Pollinator Habitat along a 16-km Utility Corridor in Toronto
Corey Wells, Katie Turnbull and Colin Love, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Pollinator Habitat Restoration on Roadsides and Utility Corridors in Eastern Ontario: A Pilot Project
Holly Bickerton and Carolyn Callaghan, Canadian Wildlife Federation

Incorporating Pollinator Habitat into Lanark County's Vegetation Management Plan
Michelle Vala, Lanark County

12:20 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Buffet Lunch



Workshop: Restoring Pollinator Habitat on Rights-of-Way

AGENDA

1:00 p.m. - 2:05 p.m.

Restoration How-to: Preparing, Planting and Maintaining Habitat at a Landscape Scale

Corridors for Pollinators: Rights-of-way Case Studies from Southwestern Ontario

Jake Lozon, Ontario Nativescapes

Restoring Roadside Bee Habitat in Southwestern Ontario
Stefan Weber, Ontario Plant Restoration Alliance

Seed Management for Large Native Meadow Ecological Restoration Projects

Mary Gartshore, Ecological Restoration Specialist (CERP)

2:05 p.m. - 2:25 p.m.

Public Relations for Your ROW Pollinator Project

Meadoway Magic: a Behind-the-scenes Look at Storytelling and Communications

Karen Horsman, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

2:25 p.m. - 2:40 p.m.

Afternoon Break

2:40 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

Lightning Talks

Lightning Talks are intended to give brief updates on ongoing or upcoming projects across sectors.

Hydro Corridor Meadow Opportunity: Hilton Falls
Nigel Finney, Conservation Halton

Pollinator Restoration Projects at Ontario Power Generation
Ashley Fox, Ontario Power Generation

Efforts and perspectives on meadow restoration at Rouge National Urban Park
Leonardo Cabrera, Parks Canada Agency

3:15 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Breakout Group Discussions

4:00 p.m. - 4:20 p.m.

Group Summaries and Discussion

4:20 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Closing Remarks

4:30 p.m.

Adjourn

Appendix II. List of Organizations in Attendance

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|--|------------------------------|
| Bee City Canada | Wildlife Preservation Canada |
| Central Lake Ontario CA | WSP Canada |
| City of Brampton | |
| City of Burlington | |
| City of Hamilton | |
| City of Kitchener | |
| City of London | |
| City of Mississauga | |
| City of Ottawa | |
| City of Vaughan | |
| Conservation Halton | |
| Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark | |
| Credit Valley Conservation | |
| Emerging Leaders for Biodiversity | |
| Environment and Climate Change Canada | |
| Fiona Rintoul & Associates, Landscape Architects | |
| Grand River CA | |
| Grasslands Ontario | |
| Hamilton Naturalists' Club | |
| Hydro One | |
| Lake Simcoe Region CA | |
| Lanark County | |
| Maitland Valley CA | |
| MASS LBP | |
| Nature Conservancy of Canada | |
| Neighbours Sharing Native and Pollinator Plants | |
| Northland Power | |
| Ontario Biodiversity Council | |
| Ontario Land Trust Alliance | |
| Ontario NativeScape | |
| Ontario Plant Restoration Alliance | |
| Ontario Power Generation | |
| Parks Canada | |
| Pollinator Partnership Canada | |
| Royal Botanical Gardens | |
| Rideau Valley CA | |
| St Clair Region CA | |
| St. Williams Nursery and Ecology Centre | |
| TCDSB | |
| Toronto and Region CA | |
| Town of Georgina | |
| Town of Newmarket | |
| Town of Oakville | |
| University of Illinois at Chicago | |

Appendix III: Photos





