

# A GREENBELT... FOR ESSEX COUNTY?



Image Landsat / Copernicus  
Image NOAA

John DeMarco  
March 22, 2023

**Better yet...**

**A Green NET**





Even better...

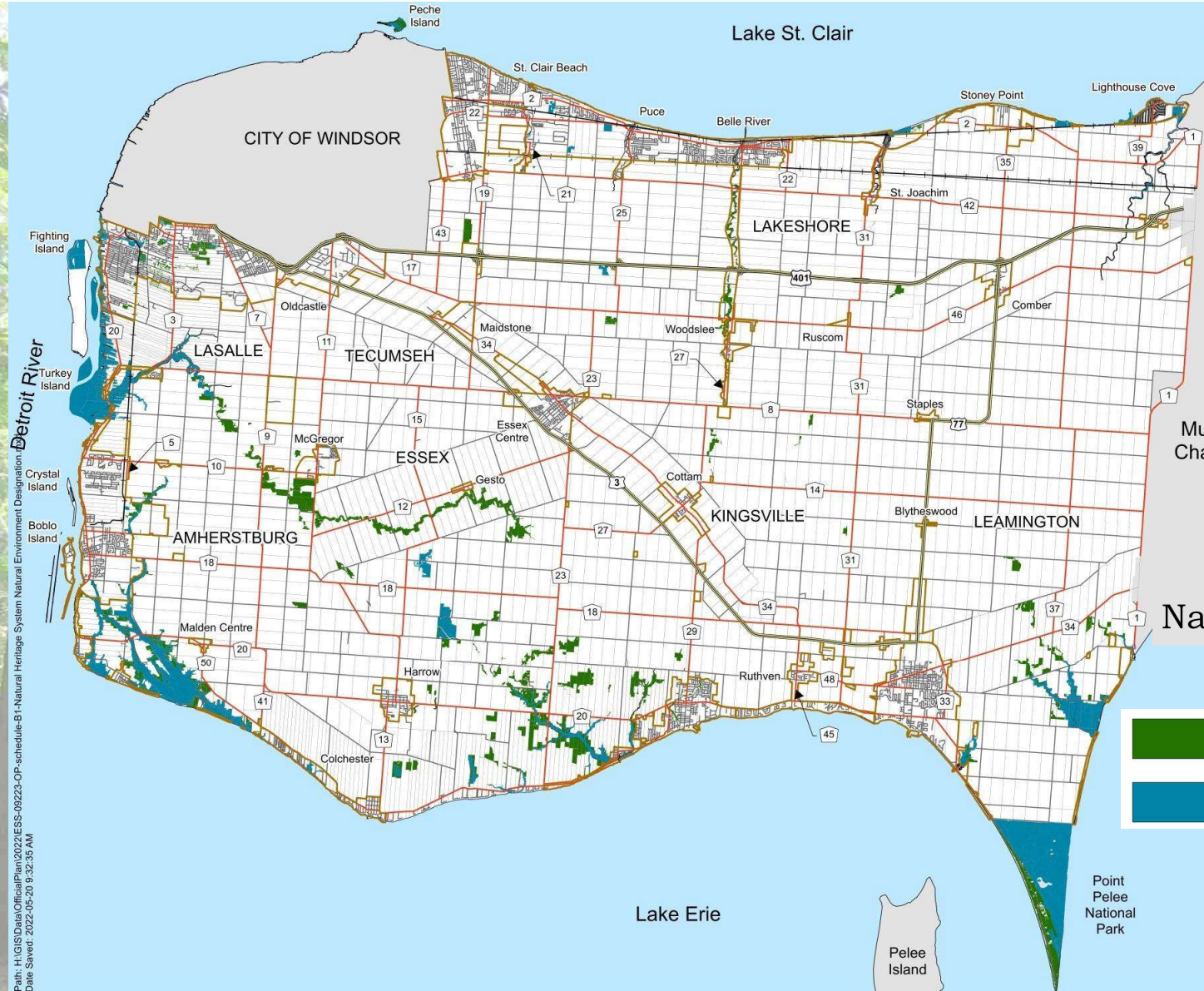
A Green**R** Net

...where **R** is for **R**estoration

# What's in the 2014 Official Plan?

## “1.5 GOALS FOR A HEALTHY COUNTY

- a) To protect and enhance the natural heritage system by **increasing the amount of core natural area and natural buffers** where possible, particularly through **restoration** efforts.
  
- b) To **link wildlife habitat and natural heritage areas to each other**, human settlements to other human settlements and people to nature.”

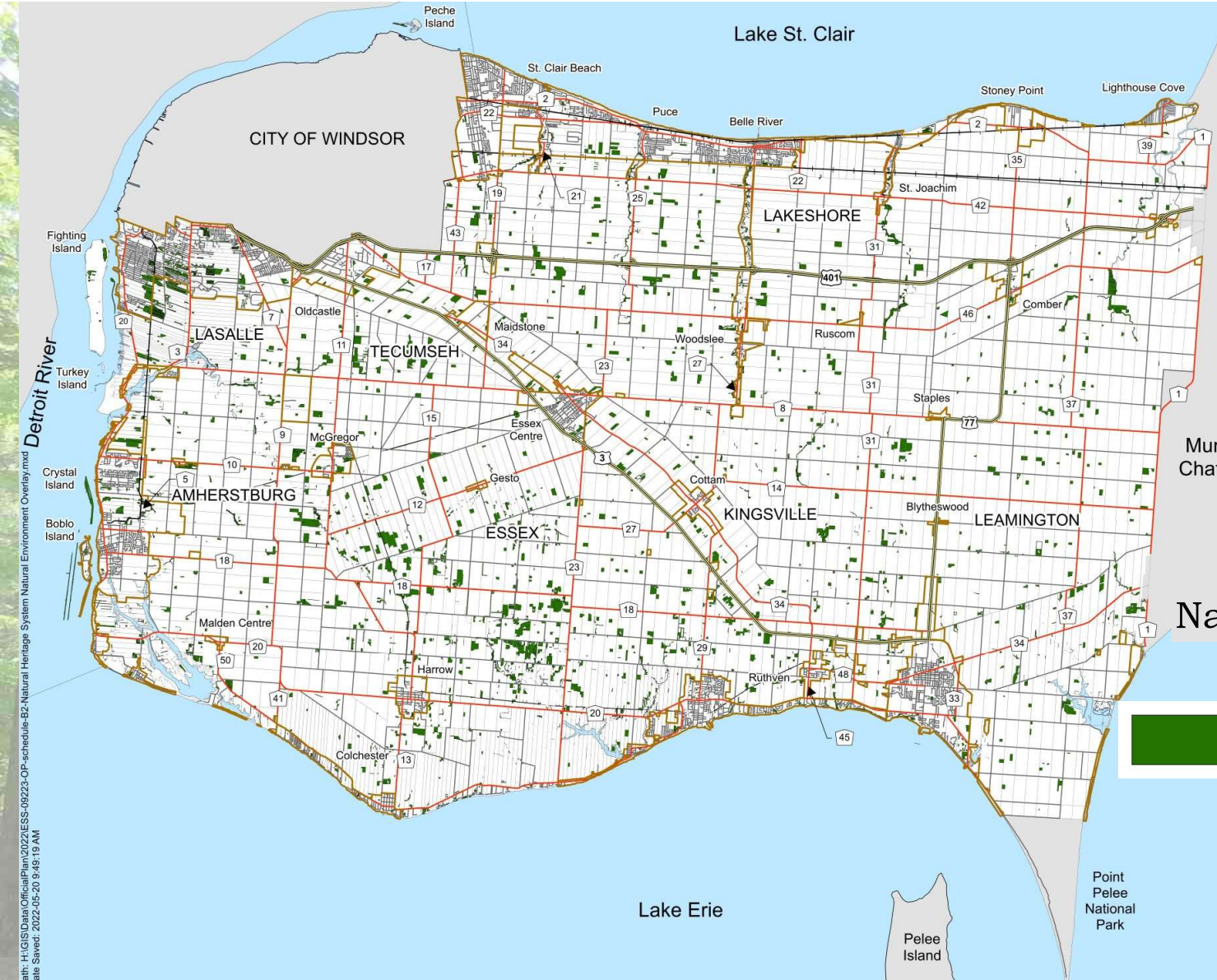


**Schedule B1**  
**Natural Heritage System**  
**Natural Environment Designation**

- Significant Terrestrial Features
- Provincially Significant Wetlands

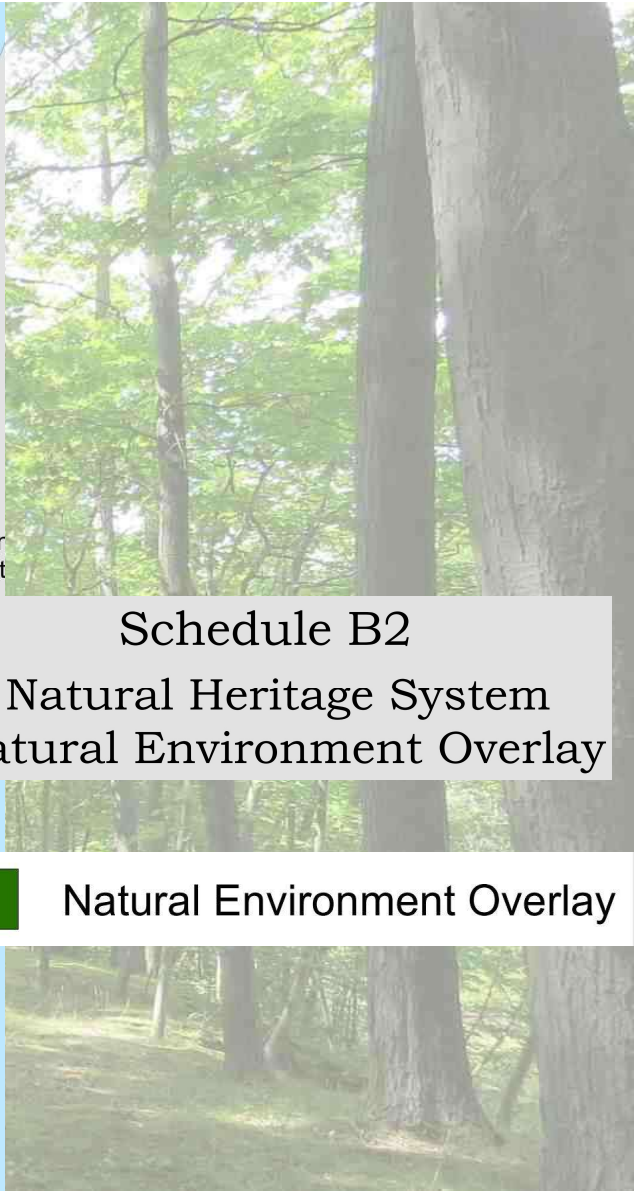


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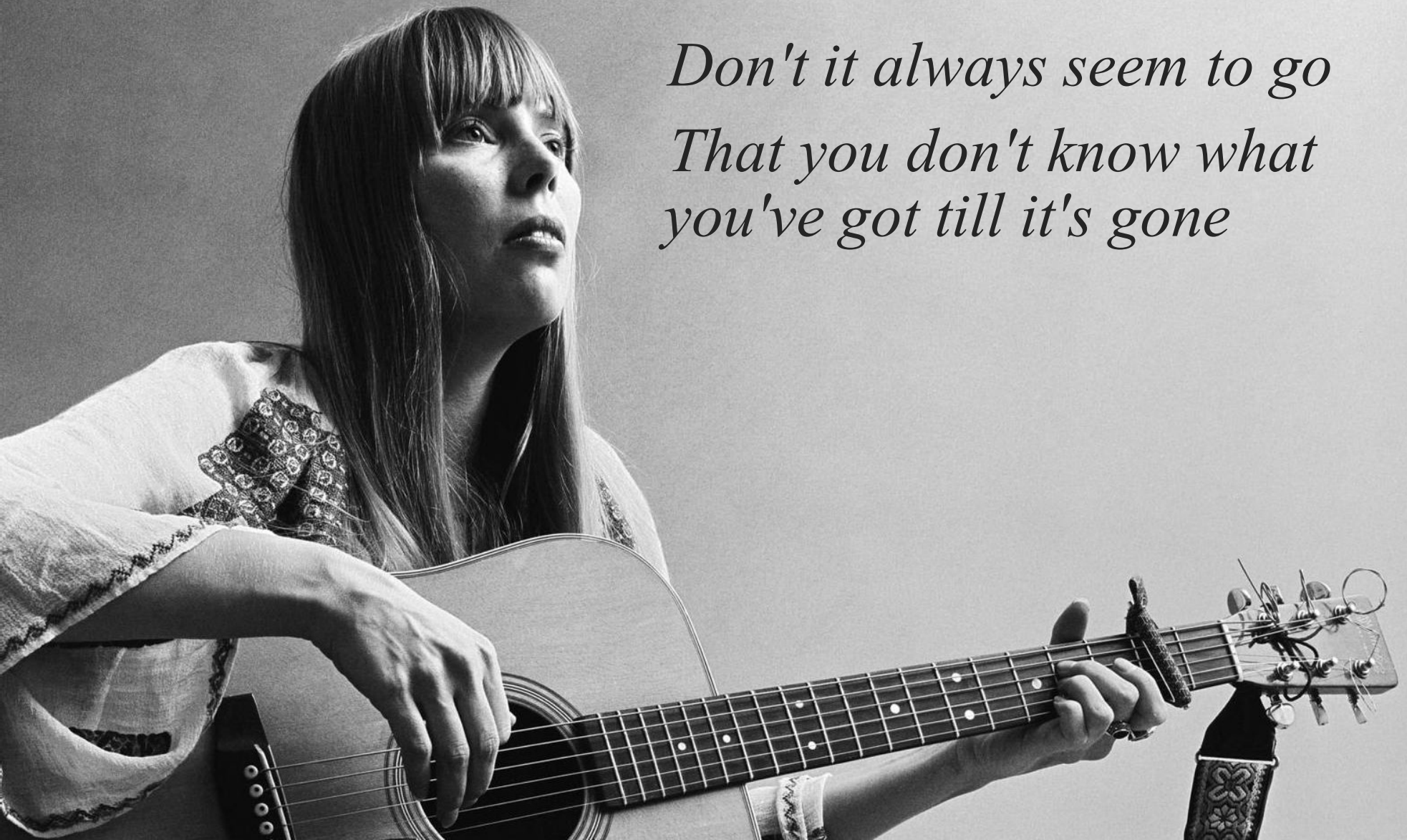
Schedule B2  
 Natural Heritage System  
 Natural Environment Overlay

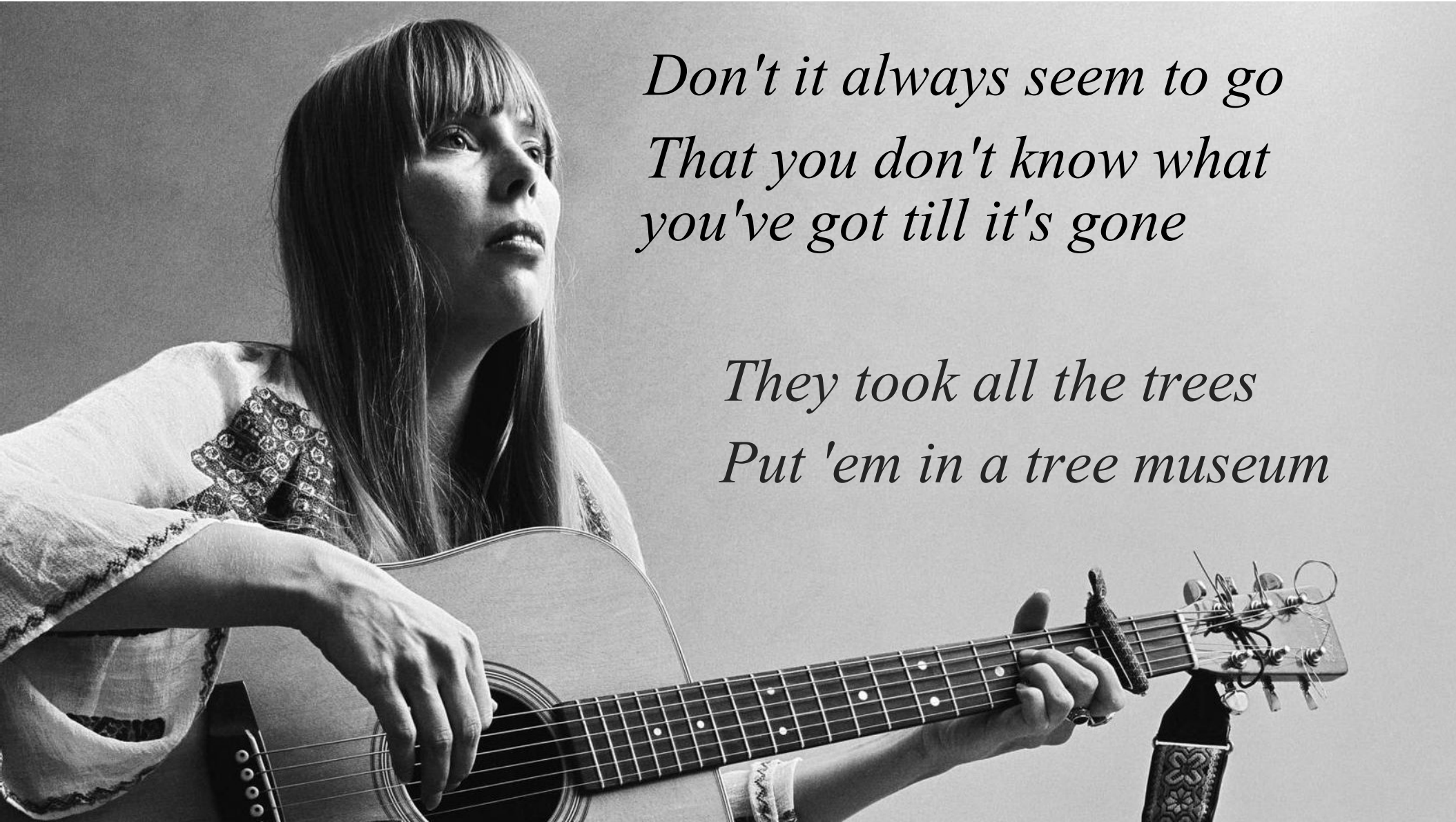
 Natural Environment Overlay



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*Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what  
you've got till it's gone*

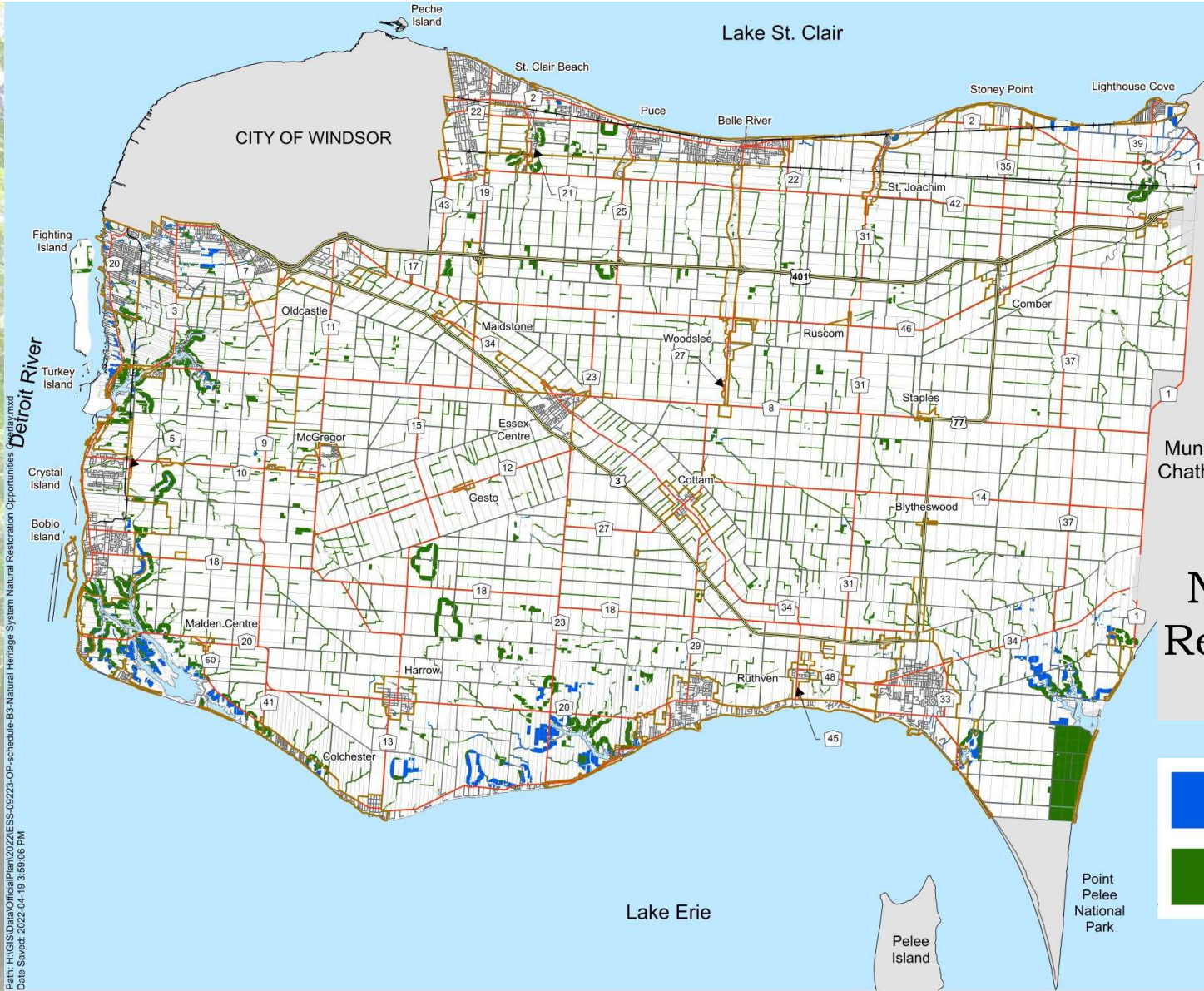




*Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what  
you've got till it's gone*

*They took all the trees  
Put 'em in a tree museum*

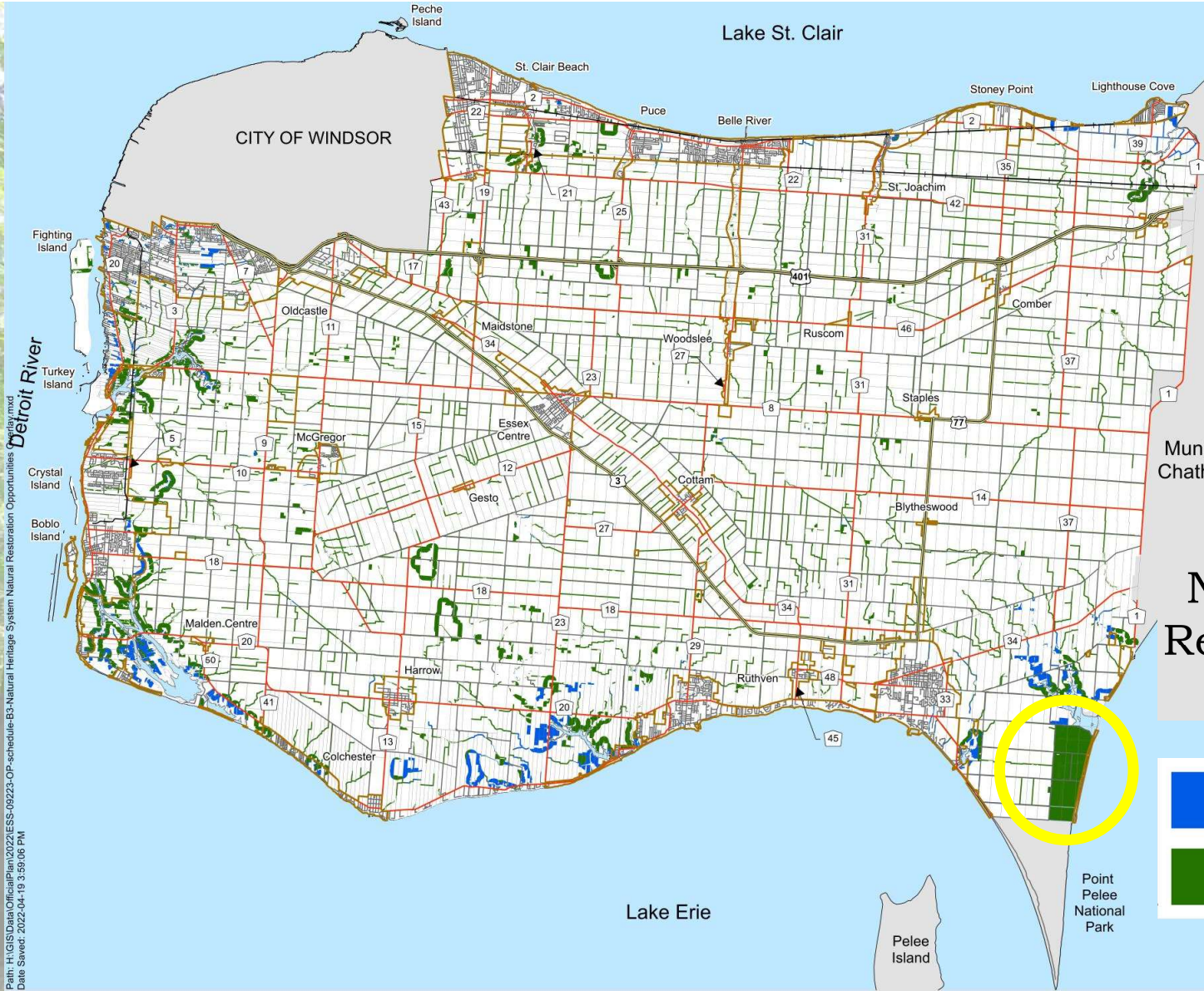




# Schedule B3 Natural Heritage System Restoration Opportunities Overlay

- Primary (3-5)
- Secondary (1-2)

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# Schedule B3 Natural Heritage System Restoration Opportunities Overlay

- Primary (3-5)
- Secondary (1-2)

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**Is this approach to restoration  
working?**

**Is it enough?**

**How much natural habitat is enough  
for Essex County?**

# Fragmentation continues..



2017



2022



# Official Plan Review

Phase 1 Background Report

One Land, One Climate, One Future, Together



**Feedback from Council members:**

**“The OP needs to do a better job on environmental matters, and to provide targets for natural heritage protection county-wide.”**



## Feedback from planning staff (TPAC):

*How Effective has the Existing County Official Plan Been in Achieving the Stated Goals of the Plan?*

- “Less natural areas are being removed.”
- “It is difficult to know how effective the Plan has been, since no monitoring is being done and no data is being kept.”

*Key Challenges and Issues to be Addressed Over the Next 25 Years*

- “Placing a greater emphasis on natural heritage restoration policies, and identifying effective implementation tools and incentives.”



# A GreenR Net for Essex County:

It starts with  
a vision of  
the future  
landscape

# How to get there?

## Initial thoughts...

Start by engaging with First Nations - could there be common ground to work together on a historic restoration process?

Take time – maybe 100 years? – to gradually restore land to natural vegetation under diverse arrangements.

In the interim, use all available tools and strategies to minimize irreversible land use changes in areas targeted for restoration: stricter regulations, persuasion, mobilizing a range of stakeholders...



# Suggested land uses in Green R Net

ALLOWED USES	NOT ALLOWED
<p>Continuation of soil-based agriculture</p> <p>Tree plantations, including mixed use</p> <p>Conservation areas</p> <p>Naturalized wetlands to receive flood waters</p> <p>Game / hunting reserves</p> <p>Wind farms</p> <p>Existing homes and buildings remain</p>	<p>No conversion to incompatible land uses</p> <p>No greenhouses or other infrastructure-intensive agriculture</p> <p>No new housing or other built development: find a way to direct it elsewhere</p> <p>No new roads</p> <p><i>NB: Land designated for restoration would in most cases already be zoned agricultural.</i></p>
<p><b>Long term: gradually restore to native vegetation, under a range of ownership and management regimes.</b></p>	



# Recommendations to Council

1. Adopt a resolution articulating a long-term vision and targets for habitat restoration.
2. Open a dialogue on shaping the future landscape with concerned First Nations, followed by other stakeholders.
3. Build a process into the Official Plan for developing a spatial restoration plan, strategy and actions during the next 5 years.
4. In the interim, strengthen regulations and use all available tools to avoid built development outside of settlement boundaries.

A photograph of a dense forest with tall, slender trees and vibrant green foliage. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating dappled light on the forest floor. The text "THANK YOU!" is overlaid in the center in a bold, dark blue font.

**THANK YOU!**