

A GREENBELT... FOR ESSEX COUNTY?



Image Landsat / Copernicus
Image NOAA

John DeMarco
May 24, 2023

Better yet...

A Green NET





Even better...

A Green **R Net**

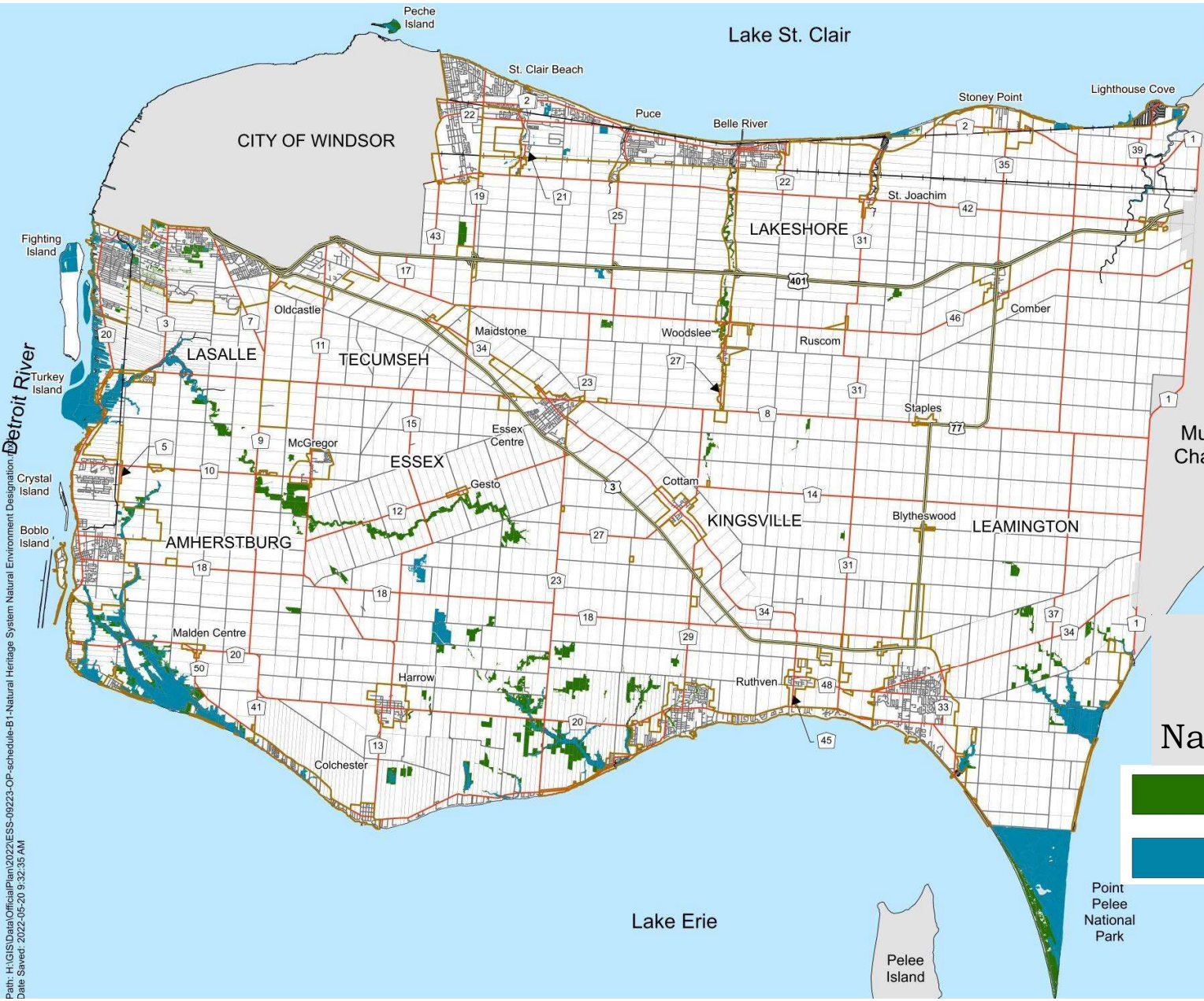
...where **R is for **R**estoration**

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.

k) To **link wildlife habitat and natural heritage areas to each other**, human settlements to other human settlements and people to nature.”



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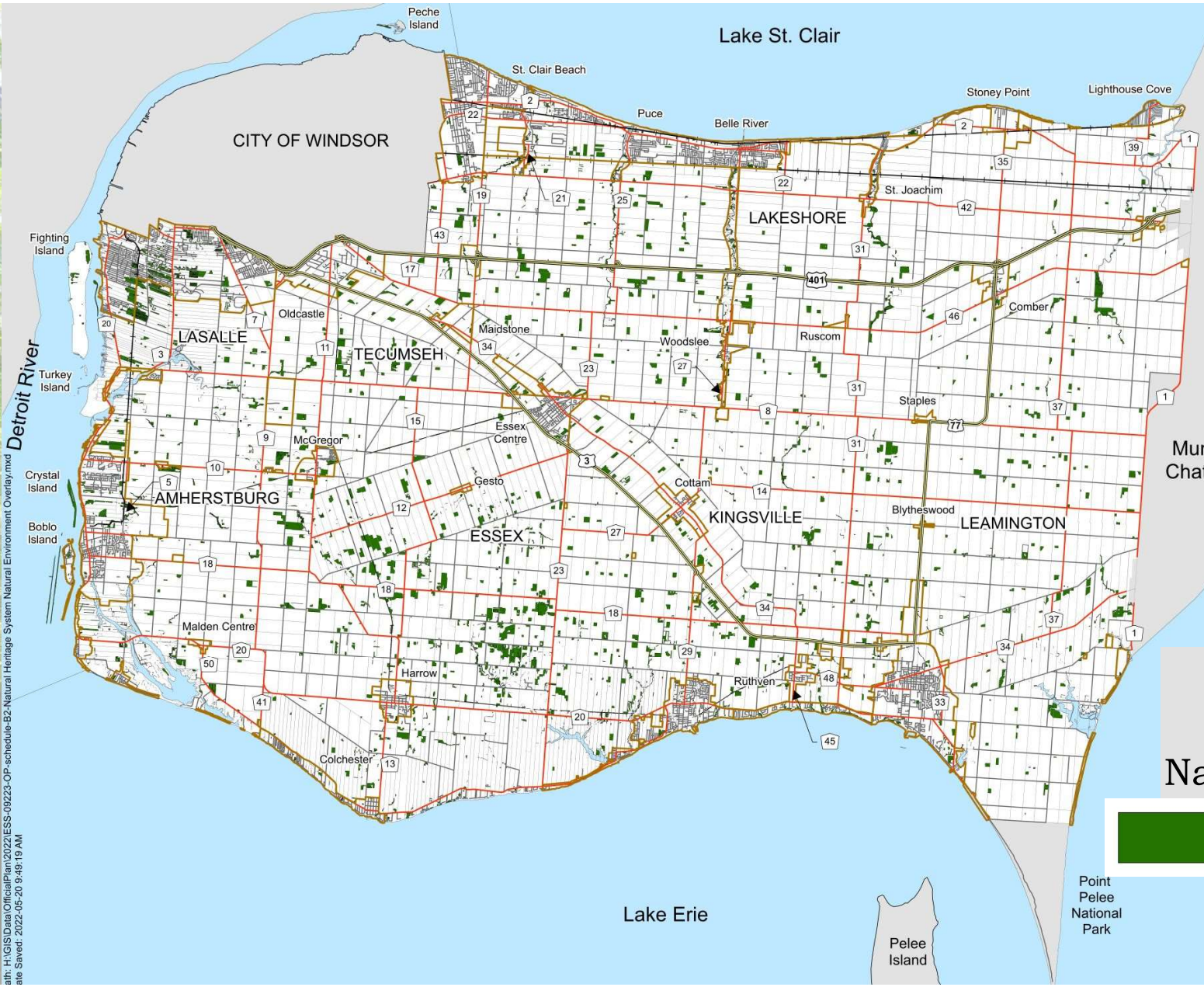
“Natural Environment Designation”

Is enough habitat protected?

Schedule B1
 Natural Heritage System
 Natural Environment Designation

- Significant Terrestrial Features
- Provincially Significant Wetlands





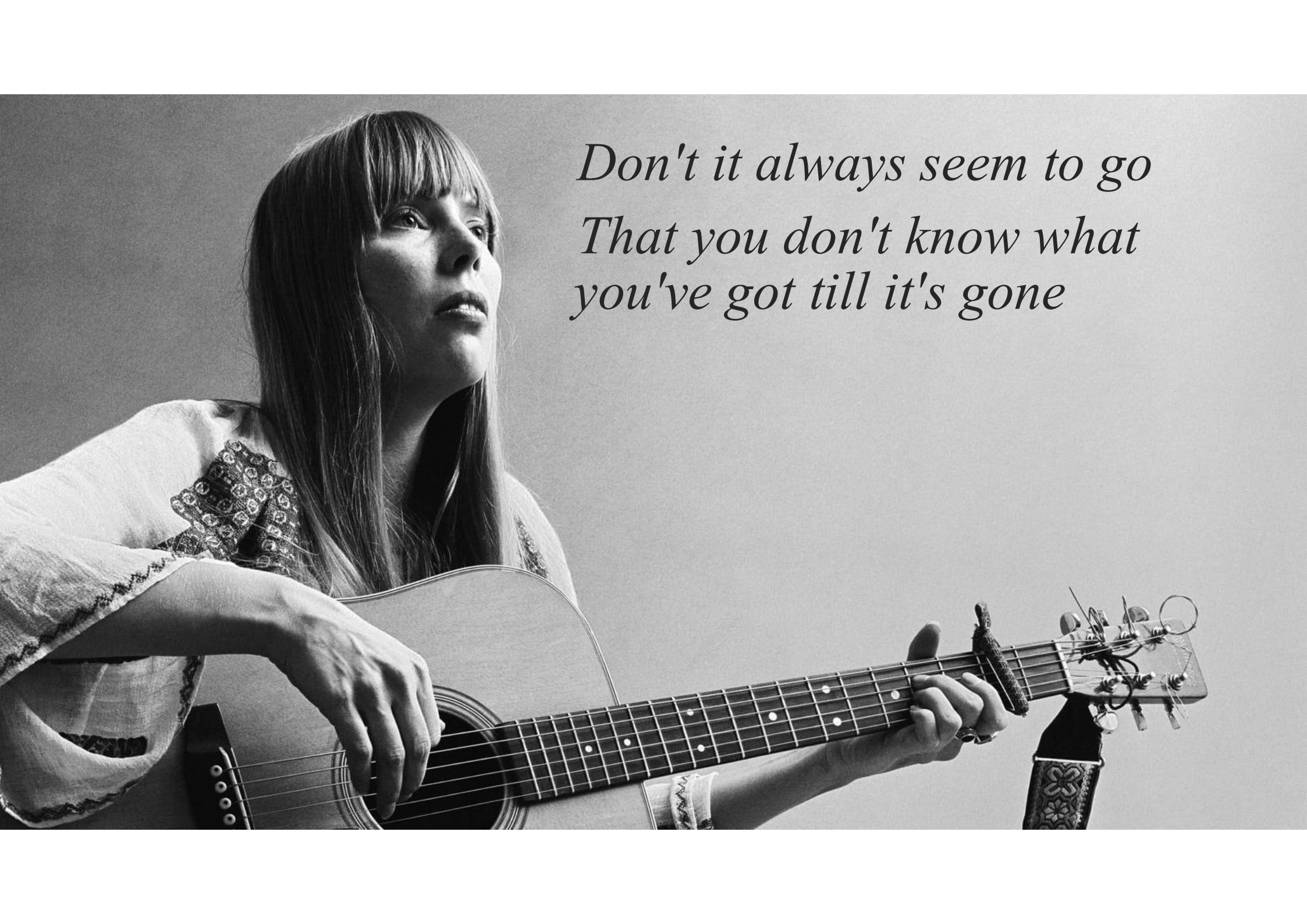
“Natural Environment Overlay” –

Small areas;
weaker level
of
protection

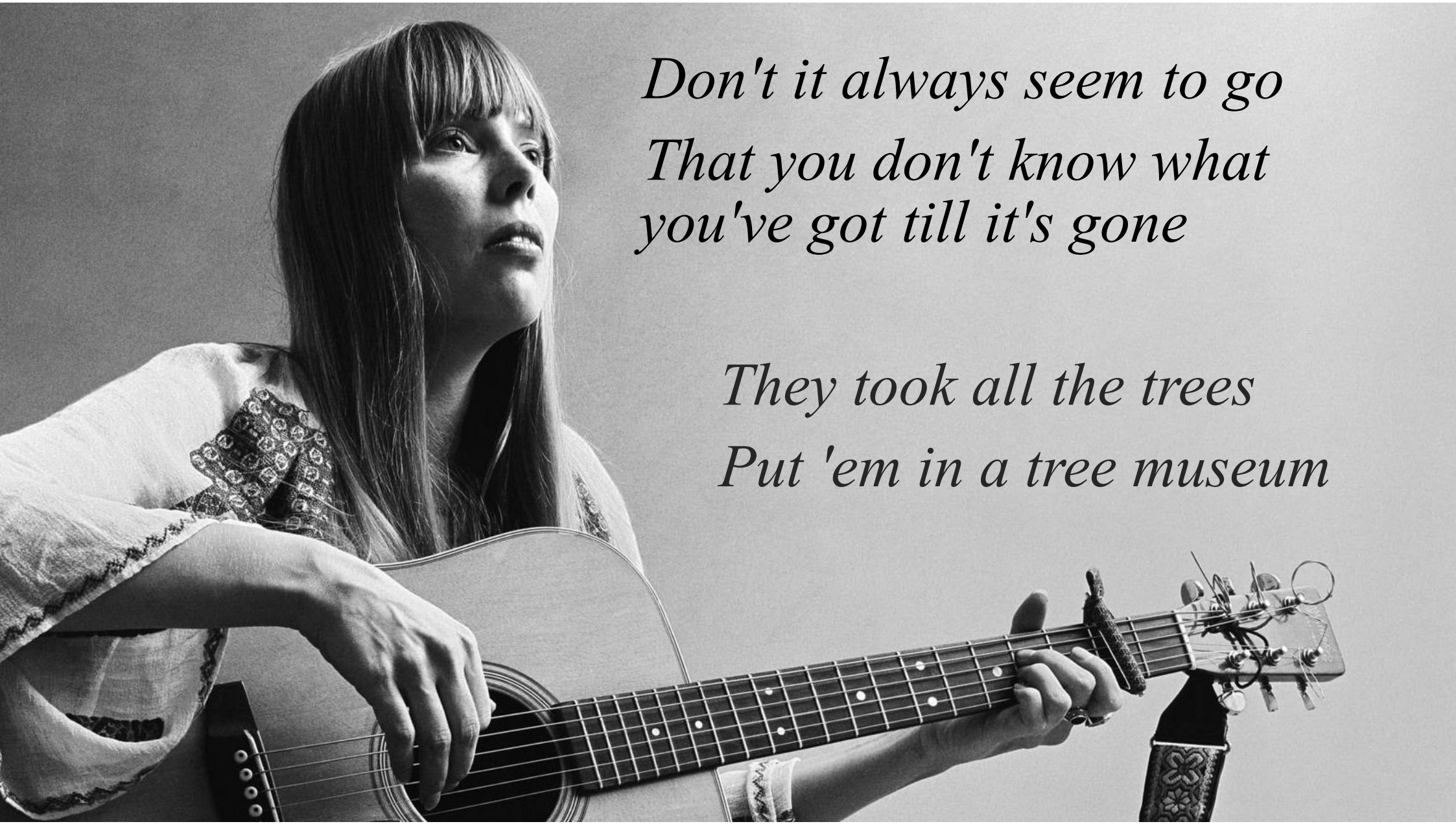
Schedule B2
Natural Heritage System
Natural Environment Overlay

 Natural Environment Overlay

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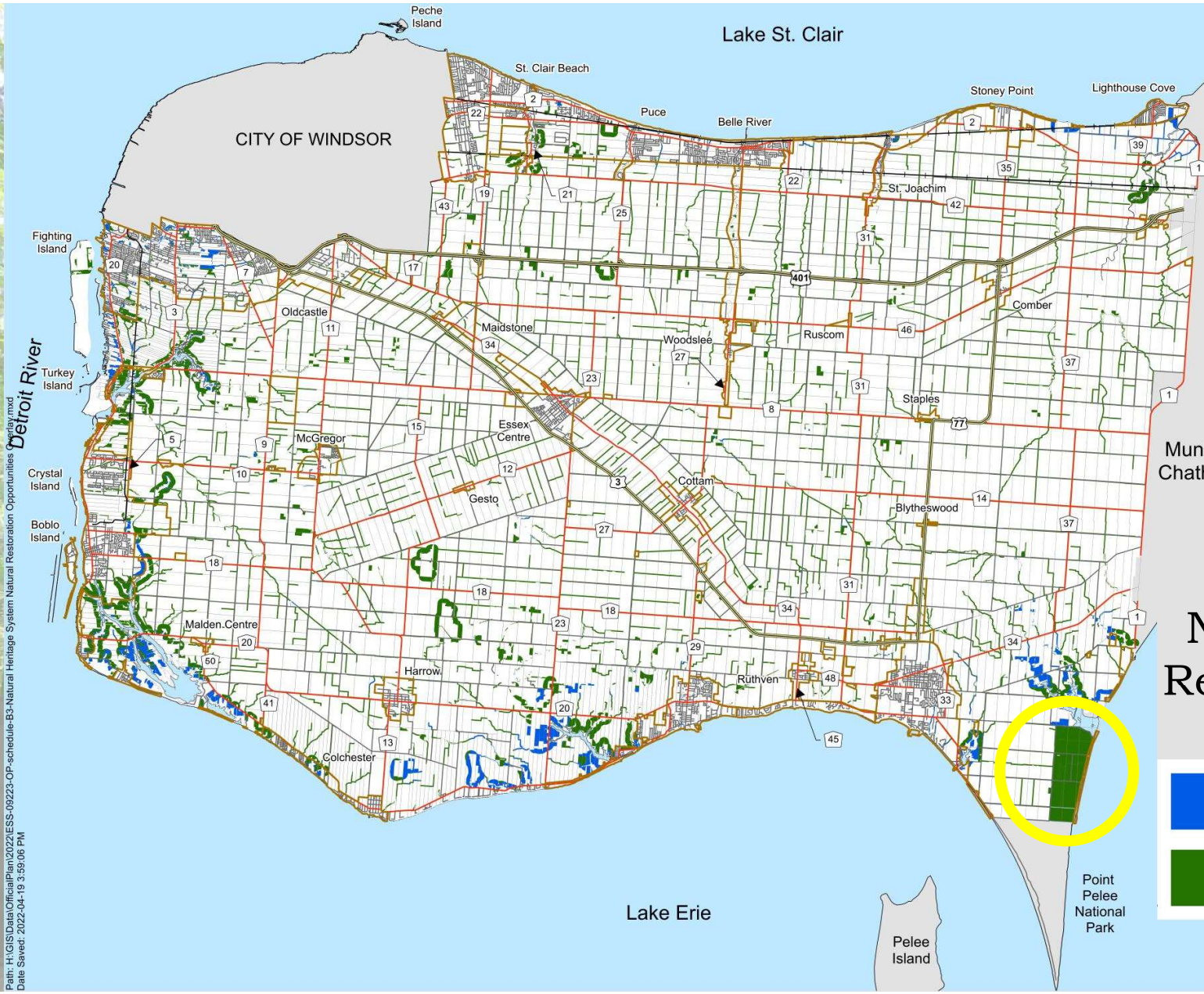


*Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what
you've got till it's gone*



*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*



“Restoration Opportunities”

—
A foundation to build on

Schedule B3
Natural Heritage System
Restoration Opportunities
Overlay

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

**Meanwhile,
fragmentation
continues..**



2017



2022



Some key question for the plan review:

Is the existing approach to restoration getting us where we want to be?

How much natural habitat do we want to have in our landscape?



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.”

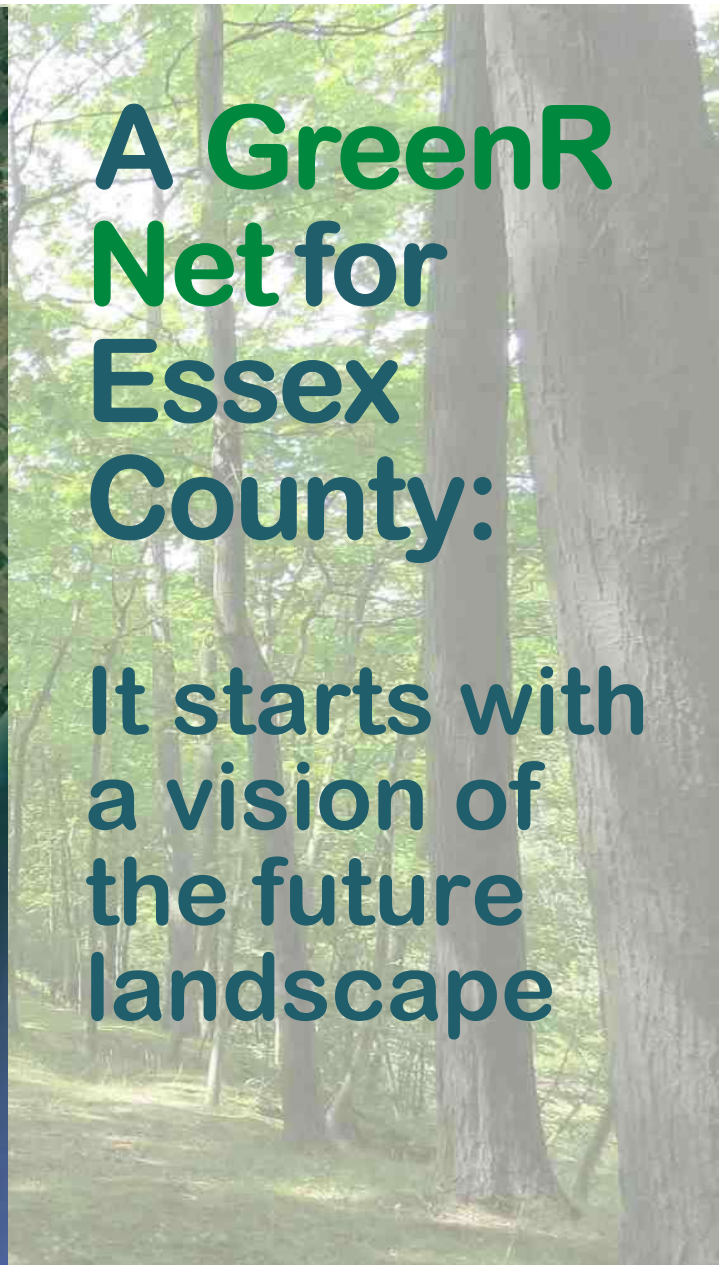
Key Challenges and Issues to be Addressed Over the Next 25 Years

- “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

Continuation of soil-based agriculture
Tree plantations, including mixed use
Conservation areas
Naturalized wetlands to receive flood waters
Game / hunting reserves
Wind farms
Existing homes and buildings remain

TO BE AVOIDED

These land use changes should be avoided:

New housing or other built development
Greenhouses or other infrastructure-intensive agriculture
New roads
Conversion to other incompatible land uses

NB: Land designated for restoration would in most cases already be zoned agricultural.

Long term: gradually restore to native vegetation, under a range of ownership and management regimes.

Recommendations to Council

0. Dare to imagine a future different from the present!
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, targets, 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.



Future generations will..

THANK YOU!