

Executive Summary

The Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) is an irregular ridge, stretching 160 kilometres from the Niagara Escarpment in the west to the Trent River in the east. The Moraine contains the headwaters of more than 65 watercourses that drain north into Georgian Bay, Lake Simcoe, Lake Scugog, and Kawartha Lake, and south into Lake Ontario. These watersheds are included in the jurisdictions of nine Conservation Authorities. This report investigated headwater bioregionalism and its impact on land use planning in the ORM. More specifically, this report:

- Examined the evolution of the institutional frameworks guiding watershed planning in Ontario;
- Described the conceptual and theoretical foundations of bioregionalism;
- In the context of bioregionalism, characterized the headwaters bioregionalism approach employed in the ORM; and
- Explored the Conservation Authorities Moraine Coalition's (CAMC) influence on applying bioregionalism within environmental planning in southern Ontario.

Qualitative methods including a literature review and a thematic analysis of provincial legislation, plans, technical guides, and agency reports, were used to achieve the above objectives. Based on the analysis, the headwater bioregional framework guiding land uses in the ORM can be classified as a scientific-managerial bioregion. This is characterized by: i. boundaries based on major natural features including key hydrological features, identified through systematic processes; ii. the use of watershed-based action-oriented approaches to manage the bioregion including monitoring; iii. the use of provincial and watershed plans as growth management tools intended to guide development of the bioregion; and iv. decision-making authority based on systematic approaches to land use planning requiring a variety of experts to inform decision-making. It was also found that headwater

bioregionalism represents a framework capable of addressing political, boundary, and capacity issues often challenging planning organizations.

This research provides insight into how headwater bioregionalism is used as a collaborative framework for managing natural resources and growth on a regional scale, through a watershed-based approach. Moving forward, interested organizations in the headwater bioregional approach to regional planning and growth management should identify mutually shared natural resources at a regional scale which crosses multiple jurisdictional boundaries that might benefit from a more integrative planning process. Bioregionalism approaches should be considered to address regional environmental issues that go beyond an organization's jurisdictional and resource capacity. Partnerships and collaboration are required to apply the bioregionalism approach.