



**Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital**  
**Alliance pour les espaces verts dans la capitale du Canada**

Postal address: P.O. Box 55085, 240 Sparks Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 1A1 Tel.: (613) 722-6039  
E-mail: [admin@greenspace-alliance.ca](mailto:admin@greenspace-alliance.ca) Web site: [www.greenspace-alliance.ca](http://www.greenspace-alliance.ca)

---

May 28. 2013

**June 8 Natural Linkages Panel Discussion**

On June 8, 2013, local ecology experts and representatives from the National Capital Commission, the Nature Conservancy, and City of Ottawa staff will be holding a public consultation and panel discussion at Hintonburg Community Centre, 1064 Wellington Street, at 10:00 a.m. to discuss natural linkages, a critical component for the sustainability of Ottawa's natural environment. This panel discussion is being hosted by the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital, and findings from this discussion could significantly affect environmental protection policy in Ottawa's Official Plan review looking at the next 20 years.

So what are natural linkages and why are they important?

Urban development creates housing, malls, roadways, etc., but it can also destroy the habitats of living things and concentrate them into pockets or "islands" of greenspace that may be fragmented or disconnected from one another ecologically. This reduces the overall biodiversity and health of biota in an area. Imagine a city park surrounded by pavement and concrete buildings on all sides. It could end up in a few years with little more to see than a few mangy squirrels and some diseased trees.

That's where natural linkages come in. Also known as wildlife corridors or eco-corridors, natural linkages are interconnected natural environments that permit the migration of animals and plants as urban development moves forward. Preserving and strengthening natural linkages allows for mobility of flora and fauna, which can mitigate some of the adverse ecological effects of habitat fragmentation. Protecting biodiversity strengthens our local environment's resilience, and helps protect us from the effects of ecological disasters (from ice storms to sewage spills), promotes healthy populations, and enhances the natural beauty and enjoyment of our city.

Ottawa's Official Plan, currently under review as part of Ottawa's "Liveable Ottawa" project, provides the vision and the policy framework of the future growth of the city. The Official Plan is one of the city's most important legal documents related to protection of Ottawa's natural features because it governs zoning and environmental assessment regulations that are key to project approvals. When urban expansion or land development threatens movement between habitats, the chances of survival of local species greatly increases when natural linkages are incorporated into the design of a project

or the delineation of the proposed urban expansion areas.

In a January 2013 meeting, the City of Ottawa confirmed its commitment to the Greenspace Alliance that, as part of the current review of the Official Plan, it will "identify and map existing and conceptual natural heritage linkages at a City-wide scale." Councillor Hume confirmed that any implications of this analysis would be incorporated into the Official Plan. The National Capital Commission's recently completed a study of linkages between core areas within the Greenbelt and the Nature Conservancy of Canada's development of a conservation plan for the Ottawa Valley are also providing valuable information.

The current proposal from Ottawa City staff is to designate natural linkages as part of Ottawa's Natural Heritage System on Schedule L of the Official Plan, which would trigger the requirement that an Environmental Impact Statement must be prepared as part of any development proposal in or near such a linkage. The Greenspace Alliance supports this proposal in principle, but will be pressing the City of Ottawa to confer a "protected" status on certain key linkages and explicitly recognize natural linkages as part of the Natural Heritage System, excluding them from future development.

Findings presented at the June 8 panel discussion will be used as a basis for recommendations, and to assure that Ottawa's policy on key natural spaces is moved forward as part of the City's Official Plan review.

For more information, contact:

Nicole DesRoches  
Co-Chair, Greenspace Alliance  
[nicolepdesroches@gmail.com](mailto:nicolepdesroches@gmail.com)  
819-790-9476

Adam Caldwell  
Event Organizer  
[adam@acaldwell.ca](mailto:adam@acaldwell.ca)  
613.620.7463

Erwin Dreessen,  
Co-Chair, Greenspace Alliance  
[erwin\\_dreessen@ncf.ca](mailto:erwin_dreessen@ncf.ca)  
613-739-0727