

The Rehabilitation Plan



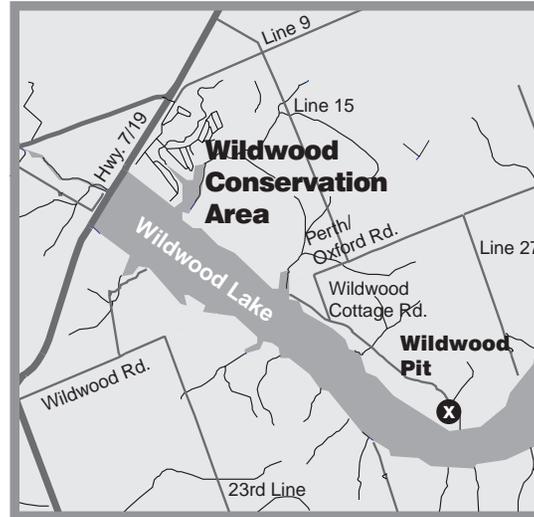
The gravel pit has renaturalized quite well on its own, creating a unique area in Wildwood Conservation Area. The rehabilitation plan enhances what is already occurring through actions such as:

- Closing the former road and breaking it up with machinery to reverse the compaction caused by vehicle traffic and allow plants to grow;
- Removing buried and exposed garbage and debris;
- Expanding and deepening the pond to create permanent habitat for wetland species;
- Planting a tall grass prairie with wildflowers in research plots on the higher, dry ground to add to the uniqueness of the site;
- Planting deciduous tree species to begin regeneration in areas where little has established on its own;
- Making homes for snakes with wood chip piles;
- Building sand pits for nesting turtles;
- Creating an interpretive trail through the area for the local community to enjoy;
- Protecting the significant parts of the site.

Partners

Landowners & Neighbours
Canadian Wildflower Society
Forest Buddies Children's Nature Club
Ministry of Natural Resources
Stratford Field Naturalists
Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

Visiting the Wildwood Gravel Pit



Nestled in Wildwood Conservation Area on the north edge of the reservoir, the Wildwood pit is approximately 5 hectares (12 acres) in size. The site includes part of lots 33 and 34, concession 13, in the Township of Zorra, Oxford County.

Long Hike (10 km): From the Wildwood Visitors Centre, follow the Lake Trail (orange blazes) southeast approximately 5 km to the Wildwood Gravel Pit. The Lake Trail enters the former gravel pit from the cottage road and follows the west side of the pit. There is also an optional loop back to the cottage road along the former gravel pit access road.

Medium Hike (4 km): Park at the west end of Perth/Oxford Road. Follow the cottage road to access the Lake Trail (orange blazes). The Wildwood Gravel Pit is approximately 2 km southeast along the Lake Trail (see above).

Short Hike (2 km): Park at the south end of Line 27. The Lake Trail (orange blazes) goes past the end of the road. Follow the Lake Trail west approximately 1 km to the Wildwood Gravel Pit.

The Wildwood Gravel Pit

Wildwood Conservation Area



Welcome to the Wildwood Pit! This brochure provides information on the site and the ongoing Rehabilitation Project. A self-guided interpretive trail through the pit highlights special features of the area. Watch for the signs along the trail and enjoy your visit.

Please...

- stay on the interpretive trail
- take only pictures, leave only footprints
- do not disturb wildlife or pick or transplant flowers
- keep this area litter free

UPPER THAMES RIVER

CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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History

The pit was opened to extract material for the construction of Wildwood Dam in the 1960s and, later, for development of the Conservation Area. Extraction occurred in phases moving from the current cottage area to today's project site. The areas first extracted have renaturalized over time or were planted with white and red pine. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) considered the site abandoned because it was never formally rehabilitated.

In 1996, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) and the MNR began a rehabilitation project, with funding from the Abandoned Pits and Quarries Rehabilitation Fund. Neighbours, local schools and community groups have been key to the success of this project.

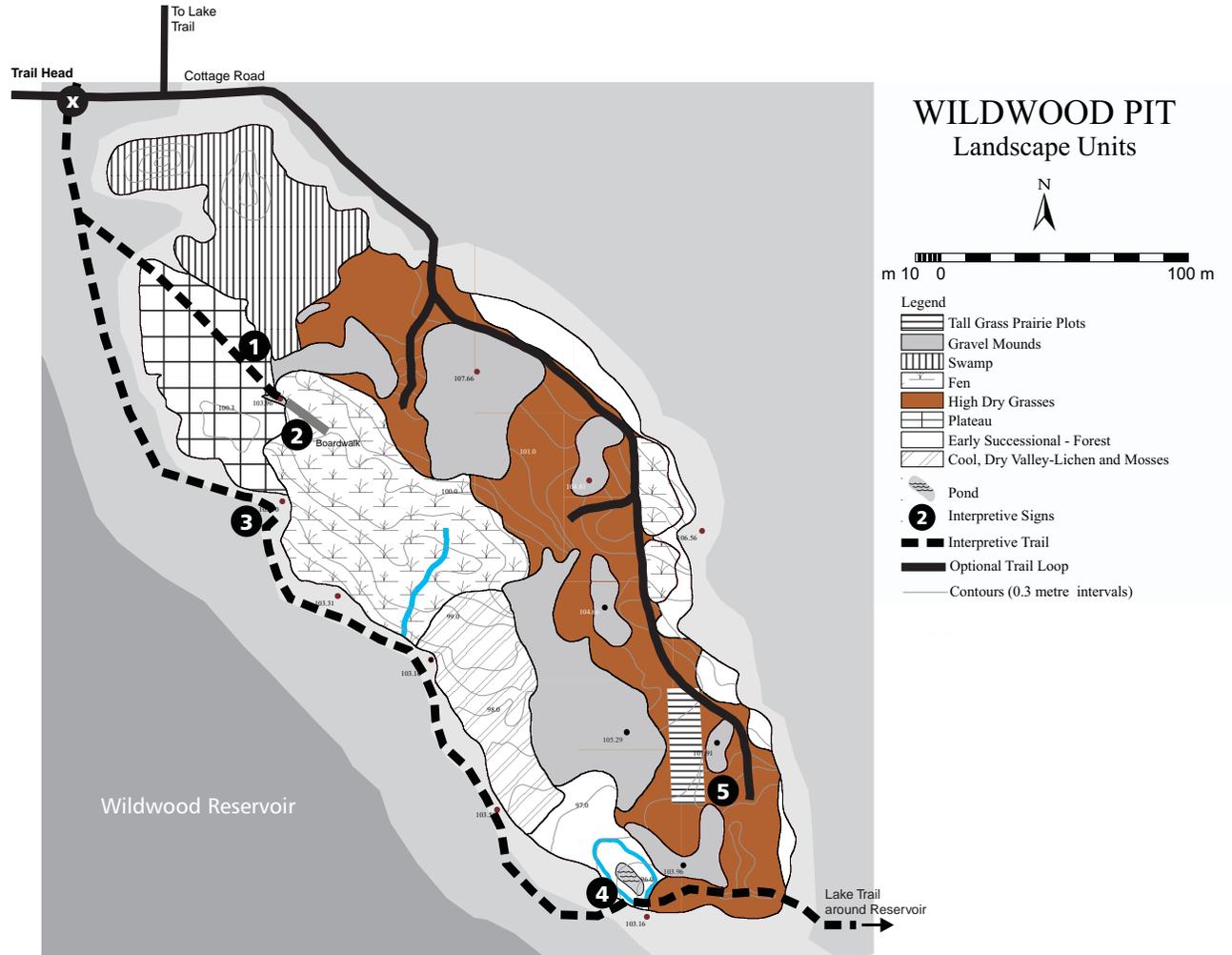
Geology

Wildwood Conservation Area is located on a former glacial spillway carved into the Stratford Till Plain by meltwater 13,000 years ago during the last Ice Age. Over time, the meltwater deposited material, ranging in size from sand particles to boulders, on top of a silty clay layer. During gravel extraction at the pit, the top layer was removed exposing the clay layer which lies close to the water table.

Biology

The gravel pit has been regenerating on its own for more than 20 years. Conditions vary across the site due to the lack of topsoil and nutrients, ground water seepage in deepened areas, and gravel mounds left behind or stock-piled during extraction. The site now features:

- A fen, which is a rare wetland community characterized by grasses and sedges.
- A very dry, almost arid section that is home to many lichens and plants that are usually found in more northern rocky areas.
- A pond that fluctuates with the reservoir levels.
- Higher dry areas, including gravel ridges and mounds. The ridges create microclimates, or areas with slightly different temperatures, in the areas



they shelter. Unusual grasses as well as deciduous trees have moved in to some of these sheltered areas.

The coniferous plantations surrounding the site also influence the climate of the site and contribute to its uniqueness.

To date, biologists have recorded approximately 115 plants in the pit, including two plants not found elsewhere in Oxford County: Yellow Bedstraw and Cotton-grass. Many other plants are not found elsewhere in the Conservation Area, including:

Bebb's Sedge, Poverty Grass, Variegated Scouring Rush, Tall Manna Grass, and Nodding Bulrush.

A variety of wildlife also finds this area attractive. The bird species seen using the area include Rufous-sided Towhee, Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird and many other more common birds. The ridges provide a favourite spot for nesting turtles. The flatter, dryer areas of the pit provide good habitat for snakes and nesting Killdeer. Spring Peepers, Green Frogs and other amphibians can be heard at dawn and dusk.