

WADIS CREEK MARSH

UTM Ref. 17TPA496101

Brunel Township, Lake of Bays
Status: Recommend Heritage Site

Area: 10 ha

Site Characteristics

This site is situated at the mouth of a slow moving, meandering creek which empties into Whitehouse Bay on the western shore of Lake of Bays. Silt is deposited from the creek onto sand and gravel substrates in Lake of Bays, forming a shallow littoral zone which supports an emergent marsh community. This community is sustained by creek-transported sediments as well as lakeshore currents (Brunton 1991 b). It supports a diversity of species including Three-way Sedge (*Dulichium arundinaceum*) Swamp Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*) Robbin's Sedge (*Eleocharis robbinsii*) Floating Burreed (*Sparganium fluctuans*), Northern Manna Grass (*Glyceria borealis*), plus Floating Hearts, Bullhead Lily, Pipewort, Wild Calla, Fragrant Water Lily, Pondweeds and Bladderworts.

The shoreline is mainly dominated by a speckled Alder - Winterberry - Elderberry Thicket Swamp while northern forests of White birch, White Spruce, Eastern White Cedar and Balsam Fir occupy the adjacent upland areas.

There were 57 species of vascular plants recorded with incidental sightings of other fauna including Beaver, Midland Painted Turtle and several unidentified minnows. There were at least 16 bird species recorded outside of breeding season, although many were likely breeders.

Significant Natural Values and Selection Criteria Met

1. **Quality** - (B3) The area contains a good example of pure marsh vegetation at an area where riverine and lacustrine habitat meet. The existence of cover for waterfowl nesting and aquatic vegetation for protection by young fish supplies important wildlife habitat (Towles 1988). Brunton (1991 b) evaluated the area as a regionally significant marsh for candidate ANSI status.

Ownership, Disturbance and Sensitivity

The area is privately owned with the marsh designated as "hazard area" by the Ministry of Natural Resources. This designation merely limits development. Disturbances to the area are several. Immediately downstream of the bridge crossing of Muskoka Road #9 are cleared areas with permanently occupied dwellings. Lawns extend to the creek bed and Canada Geese are fed at one dwelling. Cottage encroachment is evident on either side of the creek mouth. Boats and canoes occasionally travel a short distance of 100-200m upstream. Shallow water prevents many boats from entering the marsh, thus maintaining the quality. The sensitivity of the site is related to the area of the marsh and the function that it has in relation to its location on a lake with year-round riverine input. Natural expansion of the marsh habitat should be allowed to occur. A suitable buffer should be established with development prohibited within that area and limited development on lands adjacent to the buffer.