



Why the South March Highlands Should be in the Greenbelt

The South March Highlands (“SMH”) is a **“wild island”** within Canada’s Capital. The SMH literally was once an island which emerged from the Champlain Sea **11,000 years ago** as the glaciers receded.

The SMH was one of the first areas to emerge as a home for ancient peoples and became one of the biological sources for Ottawa’s existing natural environment.

The SMH is being steadily destroyed by relentless development that is approved and supported by the City of Ottawa.



The SMH’s significant natural & cultural value will be extinguished unless the NCC takes a pro-active, leadership role in protecting it.

Natural Heritage Value = Ecologically Important

- Supports over 440 native species of vascular plants and home to over 240 species of wildlife.
- Highest floristic diversity in all of Ottawa. The SMH has more rare and sensitive species of plants than in any other area in Ottawa. 30 eco-types of vegetation.
- Home to 20 documented species-at-risk (SAR). No other area in Ottawa has as many species at risk.
- Most densely bio-diverse area in all of Ottawa. Scientific studies confirm the SMH as the **“most important reservoir of ecological potential”** in Ottawa.

Geo-Heritage Value = Geologically Unique

- The only location in Ottawa where the Canadian Shield is on display. The Shield is iconic of Canada and its only expression in Ottawa should be protected by the NCC.
- A unique Nepean Sandstone Barren dates back 500 million years and is almost ½ km long. This is extremely rare.
- Unique visible examples of ancient springs are now preserved in Paleozoic-Era sandstone which are rare and not seen anywhere else in this region.

Cultural Heritage Value = Culturally Important for Indigenous People

- Grandfather William Commanda, principal Spiritual Elder for Algonquin in all Ontario and Quebec, Officer of the Order of Canada, Ancestral Carrier of 3 Sacred Wampum Belts that pre-date the arrival of Europeans, has declared that the SMH is a **Sacred place of Manitou** (Spirit). No other Sacred forest is represented in the Greenbelt.
- The SMH is Nationally Historic with at least 4 archaeological sites that date back to the Stone Age – about 10,000 years ago. There are no Paleo-Indian historical sites currently in the Greenbelt.

Protective Value = Essential to the Long Term Health of the Greenbelt

- Home to 136 nesting birds – many of which also visit Shirley’s Bay (which is in the Greenbelt). Loss of bird habitat in the SMH may impact Shirley’s Bay.
- There is an existing, documented, eco-corridor with Shirley’s Bay. Loss of habitat in the SMH will impact terrestrial species in Shirley’s Bay.
- The aquifer for North Kanata; supplies half of the water in Shirley’s Bay that does not come from the Ottawa River. Impaired hydrology in the SMH will impact the ecology of Shirley’s Bay.
- SMH has 10 habitats which help renew depleted natural areas in the Greenbelt via eco-corridors.