

Terms of Reference: Environmental Impact Study (EIS)

Effective Date: December 1, 2025

1.0. Purpose

The purpose of this Terms of Reference (ToR) is to provide clear guidance for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to assess the potential effects of proposed development on natural heritage features within the Town of Innisfil. The EIS will support informed decision-making by evaluating ecological conditions, identifying potential impacts, and recommending strategies to avoid, mitigate, or compensate for any adverse effects on significant natural features.

2.0. Applicability

An EIS is required for developments that meet any of the following criteria:

- Located within or immediately adjacent to natural heritage features, such as wetlands, woodlands, watercourses, or significant wildlife habitat.
- Fall within the Town's Natural Heritage System or other environmentally sensitive areas.
- Subject to requirements under the Town of Innisfil Official Plan, the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), or other applicable provincial policies.
- Specifically requested by the Town or the relevant Conservation Authority due to potential ecological sensitivity.

This requirement applies to the following development applications;

- Zoning By-law Amendment
- Official Plan Amendment
- Plan of Subdivision
- Plan of Condominium
- Site Plan Control Applications
- CPPS By-Law
- As deemed necessary by the Town's Planning and Development Engineering Services.

Applicants should also refer to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) Natural Heritage Evaluation / Environmental Impact Study Checklist for detailed directions on feature identification, survey requirements, and field methodologies.

3.0. Study Scope and Content

The EIS shall conform to the latest Town of Innisfil Engineering Design Standards and Specifications. The report must include the following sections;

1. Introduction and Background
 - a. Description of the study area, including existing land uses, topography, vegetation, hydrology, and infrastructure.
 - b. Overview of the proposed development, including scale, location, and any associated servicing or infrastructure works.
2. Existing Conditions and Natural Features Inventory
 - a. Inventory of natural heritage features on and adjacent to the site.
 - b. Identification of significant ecological features, wildlife habitats, and sensitive or protected species.
 - c. Assessment of the ecological functions and contributions of features to the broader landscape.
 - d. Field investigations should follow accepted ecological protocols (e.g., Ecological Land Classification for Southern Ontario) and include multi-season vegetation inventories, wildlife observations, and Species at Risk screening consistent with the LSRCA.
3. Policy and Regulatory Context
 - a. Review of applicable municipal, provincial, and federal policies, regulations, and guidelines, including the Town of Innisfil Official Plan, Provincial Policy Statement 2020, and relevant Conservation Authority guidance.
4. Impact Assessment (Direct and Indirect)
 - a. Evaluation of potential direct impacts (e.g., habitat loss, vegetation removal) and indirect impacts (e.g., hydrological changes, fragmentation, noise).
 - b. Consideration of seasonal variations, long-term effects, and potential habitat connectivity impacts.
5. Cumulative Effects Assessment
 - a. Assessment of the combined effects of the proposed development with existing, past, and foreseeable land uses and projects that may affect ecological integrity.
6. Avoidance, Mitigation, and Compensation Measures
 - a. Identification of measures to avoid or minimize impacts, including buffers, setbacks, or timing restrictions.
 - b. Recommendations for restoration or compensation where residual impacts remain.
 - c. Vegetation Protection Zone (VPZ) widths should be determined in consultation with the LSRCA and supported by site-specific justification.
7. Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan
 - a. Outline of a monitoring program to evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation measures.
 - b. Provision for adaptive management should monitoring indicate that measures are insufficient.

8. Summary and Recommendations

- a. Concise summary of findings and recommended actions to ensure natural heritage features are protected.

If any of the above sections are not relevant to an application, a brief explanation under the section stating why it is not applicable must be provided.

4.0. Study Methodology and Standards

The EIS must follow accepted ecological assessment practices and adhere to the latest guidelines and standards:

- The Town of Innisfil Official Plan.
- Provincial Policy Statement (PPS 2020).
- Guidelines and recommendations from the applicable Conservation Authority and provincial ministries.
- Town of Innisfil Engineering Standards and Specifications
- Ontario Provincial Standards and Specifications
- Industry best practices

5.0. Submission Requirements

The EIS must be prepared and signed by a qualified ecologist or biologist with demonstrated expertise in ecological assessment and familiarity with relevant provincial and municipal policies. The submission package shall include:

- Digital copies of the reports
- Include relevant field data, maps, and references.
- Provide supporting documentation demonstrating the methodology and analysis.

6.0. Consultation

Early consultation with Town staff, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), and the Conservation Authority is required. Include a summary of the consultation and any adjustments made to the EIS in response to feedback.

7.0. Validity and Updates

Environmental Impact studies are valid up to three (3) years from the date of publication unless significant changes occurred on-site or new information becomes available. Updates or supplementary studies may be required if circumstances affecting natural heritage features change. Field data is considered valid for up to five (5) years, except for Species at Risk screenings, which are valid for one (1) year, in accordance with LSRCA guidance. The Town reserves the right to ask for an additional/updated scope during the review process, if necessary.