



Agricultural Impact Assessment Guidance Document

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Presentation Overview

- Agricultural Impact Assessments: Context
- What is an Agricultural Impact Assessment?
- Components of an AIA
- Who will complete and AIA?
- What an AIA can do and cannot do
- How does an AIA apply province-wide?
- Provincial Plans: Strengthening Agricultural Policies
- What do AIA's mean for farmers?
- The role of a farmer, agricultural organizations and agri-food representatives
- Overview of the AIA Guidance Document
- Environmental Registry Posting
- Questions and Feedback (ALL)

Agricultural Impact Assessments Context

- Concerns about the impacts of development on farmland and agriculture viability
- Demand for provincial requirements for Agricultural Impact Assessments (Aggregate Resources Act Review, Coordinated Plan Review)
 - Similar to natural heritage and hydrological study requirements
- Assessments if done, are inconsistent; request for provincial guidance



What is an Agricultural Impact Assessment?

What is an Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA)?

An Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) is a study that:

- Identifies and assesses potential impacts from development on agriculture (including impacts to farmland, farm operations and the surrounding area; and within the Greater Golden Horseshoe impacts on the *Agricultural System*)
- Evaluates and determines how to avoid impacts where possible, minimize and mitigate impacts

Components of an AIA

Chapter 2 provides Technical Guidelines on the structure and content that could be used to do an AIA for any type of development.

1. Introduction
2. Process
3. Study Area Identification
4. Study Methodology
5. Description of soils, land use etc.
6. Assessment of Impacts
7. Mitigation Measures
8. Net Impacts
9. Study Recommendations and Conclusion
10. Appendices

Depending on the nature, scale and location of the development, the work completed for an AIA may vary.

Who will complete an AIA?

Qualified Professional(s)/Practitioner(s)

- The Guidance Document recommends that a person undertaking an AIA should have knowledge in:
 - Agri-businesses, agricultural supply chain linkages, rural and agricultural economic development in Ontario and within the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the agri-food network, where relevant
 - Rural and agricultural land use planning
 - Canada Land Inventory (CLI) and soil sciences where relevant
 - Assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of agricultural impact mitigation measures
 - Experience and relevant university or college degrees

What an AIA can do and cannot do

- Agricultural Impact Assessments are a tool that can help:
 - protect farmland, operations and the surrounding area; and
 - support farm viability by ensuring impacts to farmland and operations are being evaluated and mitigated
 - In the Greater Golden Horseshoe this includes impacts to the Agricultural System
- An AIA is a study, it does not stop a development from happening, rather it provides a process (i.e. study) to try to ensure the development is sited or designed in a way that supports agriculture



How do AIA's apply province-wide?

- The Provincial Policy Statement, 2014 has policies that protect prime agricultural areas and limit the removal of land and other non-agricultural uses within those areas.(e.g.PPS, 2.3, 2.3.5, 1.1.3.8, 2.3.6.1)
- Policies also require impacts from any new or expanding non-agricultural uses on surrounding agricultural operations and lands are to be mitigated to the extent feasible (PPS, 2.3.6.2)
 - Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas provides information on PPS policies and AIA's
- Environmental Assessments also require that impacts to agriculture be assessed and mitigated.
- An Agricultural Impact Assessment is an effective tool that could be used to satisfy PPS, 2014 policies and as part of an Environmental Assessment process.
- Province-wide AIA's have been undertaken but there has been no consistent approach or explicit provincial requirements or direction

Provincial Plans: Strengthening Agricultural Policies

- 4 provincial plans (Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan) have updated policies to strengthen the protection of farmland and increase support to the viability of farming (Appendix A: Provincial Plan Policies)

Examples include:

- Agricultural System (moving towards integrating land use and economic development) (Appendix B)
- Agricultural Impact Assessment policies
 - Avoiding, minimizing and mitigating impacts on the Agricultural System
- Policies to require compatibility of agricultural and non-agricultural uses and mitigation to occur within the area being developed where appropriate

An AIA is defined in the Greenbelt and Growth Plan 2017 as:

A study that evaluates the potential impacts of non-agricultural development on agricultural operations and the Agricultural System and recommends ways to avoid or, if avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts.

What do AIA's mean for farmers?

- There are **no** AIA requirements for uses on farms
 - AIA's **are not** required for agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses
- BUT agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses must be compatible with the surrounding area
- This could mean some uses may require some assessment of compatibility and mitigation e.g. Minimum Distance Separation
- OMAFRA's Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas provides more information on how to satisfy these land use policy requirements

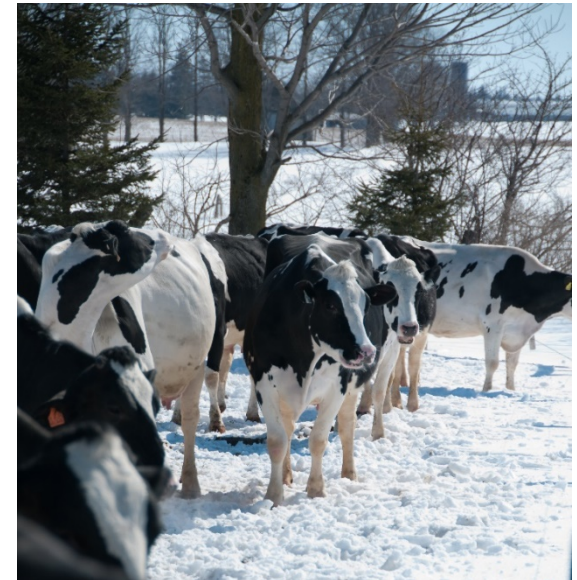
Role of farmers/landowners and agri-food representatives

- Support those who are doing an AIA so that they can appropriately reflect agriculture in the area, do a good job at assessing the impacts of the proposed development, and propose ways to avoid where possible, minimize and mitigate impacts to agriculture



Examples include:

1. Share appropriate information and data about yours and others farmland, operations and infrastructure, services and assets in the area;
2. Provide information about the potential impacts that a proposed development might have on agriculture in the area; and
3. Share ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to agriculture



• Overview of the AIA Guidance Document

Provincial guidance to provide a consistent approach to how to do AIA's.

The AIA Guidance Document includes 4 Chapters and 2 Appendices:

1.0 Overview

2.0 Technical AIA Guidelines

3.0 Mitigation measures

4.0 Background

Appendix A: Resources

**Appendix B: Rehabilitating land
back to agriculture**

Draft Agricultural Impact Assessment
(AIA) Guidance Document

March 2018



Environmental Registry (ER) Posting and Contact Information:

Comments on the draft Guidance Document are welcome between **March 15 to July 13, 2018.**

You can submit comments by:

- URL: <https://www.ero.ontario.ca/notice/013-2454>
- Email: aia@ontario.ca
- Fax: 519-826-3492 or Phone: 519-826-4369
- Mail: Agricultural Impact Assessments
c/o Michele Doncaster, Policy Advisor
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Questions?

Thank You

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Appendices

Appendix A: Provincial Plans AIA Policies

Settlement Area Boundary Expansions



Infrastructure e.g. transportation corridors



Mineral Aggregate Extraction



The 2017 Provincial Plans have policies that require Agricultural Impact Assessments for:

- Settlement Area Boundary Expansions (SABEs), Infrastructure, and Mineral Aggregate Resource Extraction sites that are within prime agricultural areas;
- For Infrastructure an AIA or equivalent analysis as part of environmental assessment

The Greenbelt Plan also has policies that:

- Require an AIA for non-agricultural uses within prime agricultural areas.

The AIA can be an effective tool to assess and mitigate impacts to agriculture province-wide. The Guidance Document is meant to help provide consistency, information and resources to undertake an AIA.

Appendix B: AIAs and the Agricultural System

- The Agricultural System is comprised of the agricultural land base and the agri-food network (infrastructure, services and assets)
- Agricultural System information and portal can be found at:
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/agsys-ggh.htm>
- **AIAs and the Agricultural System** – within the Greater Golden Horseshoe (i.e. Growth Plan area) impacts of development (i.e. settlement area boundary expansions and infrastructure) need to be assessed to avoid where possible, minimize and mitigate impacts on the Agricultural System

Appendix C: Case Study Settlement Area Boundary Expansion

Evaluation of Alternative Locations

- An AIA will need to demonstrate that alternative locations have been evaluated to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts on the Agricultural System
- Data and information is key to understanding the quality and quantify of farmland, farming operations, networks, key components of the agri-food sector that farm operations need to continue to function
- The guidelines provide information sources and data to use e.g. Agricultural System portal, Statistics Canada, Aerial Imagery, Land Use Maps
- **An AIA is only as good as the information that can be collected**

Local Knowledge and Input

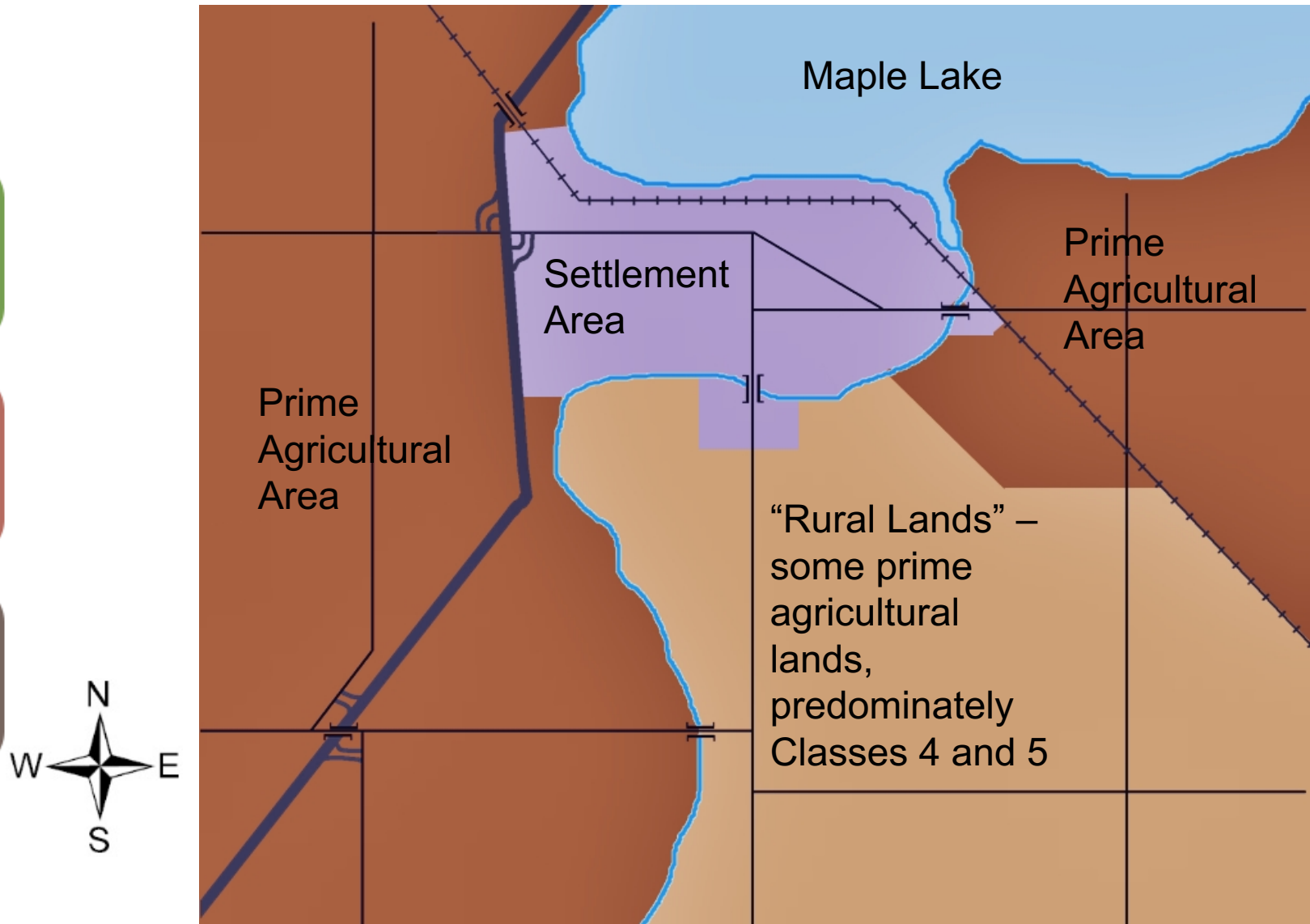
- The Guidance Document recommends: where possible, it is recommended and a best practice that information be supplemented through farm interviews, meetings, information provided directly by farmers, farm organizations or local agricultural advisory committees

Role of the Agricultural Community

- Provide information, as appropriate, about your farm (type of agricultural production, quality of the land); and
- To provide information about the surrounding area such as key infrastructure, services or assets that are critical for farming in the area and/or the agri-food sector (e.g. food processor, abattoir, farmers markets, farm implement dealership)

Appendix C: Case Study Settlement Area Boundary Expansion

1. Sharing local knowledge, data and information as appropriate



Appendix C: Case Study Settlement Area Boundary Expansion

2. Share information about the **potential impacts (economic, social and environmental) of the Settlement Area Boundary Expansion on agriculture in the area.** For example pertaining to:

- Losing farmland, farm operations and components of the agri-food network due to the land being developed; and
- The impact to the area that will continue to farm after during and after the new boundary expansion and development.

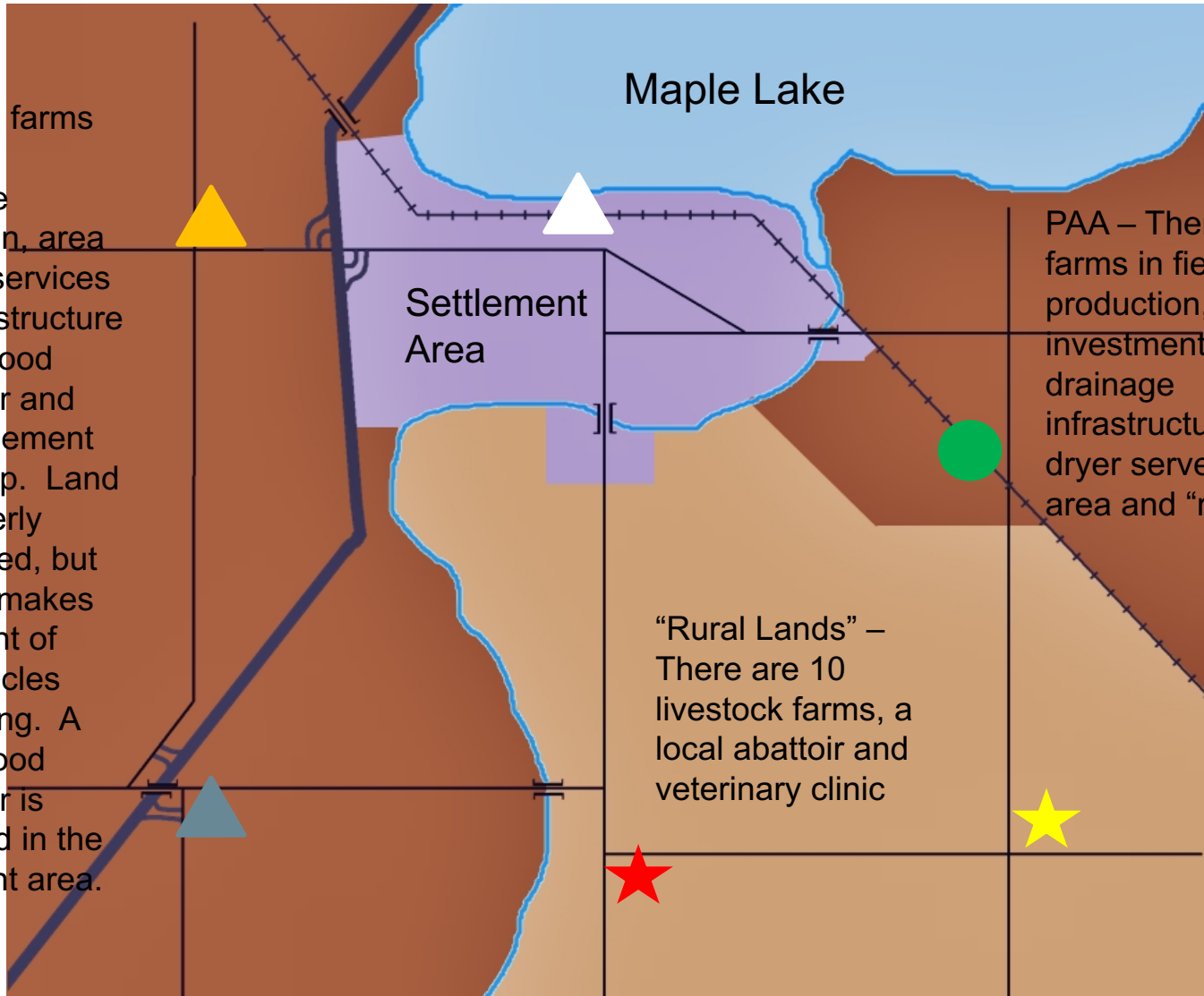
Role of the Farmer, Agri-Food Community

- Provide information about how the development will impact your farmland and operations. For example:
 - The loss of “x” number of farms to settlement area expansion will undermine the ability for other farms to operate because they relied on the agricultural production and services provided by those farms; the loss of farms can also impact other businesses
 - New roads will increase challenges for safety and moving farm vehicles and equipment
 - New neighbouring residents will lead to an increase in nuisance complaints (odour for livestock, spray for field crops) and damages and biosecurity risks due to trespassing

Appendix C: Case Study Settlement Area Boundary Expansion

Local Knowledge and Input: Farmers/landowners and other agricultural representatives could provide appropriate information and data to help describe agriculture in the area

PAA – 20 farms mostly in vegetable production, area has key services and infrastructure such as food processor and farm implement dealership. Land is not overly fragmented, but highway makes movement of farm vehicles challenging. A second food processor is supported in the settlement area.



PAA – There are 10 farms in field crop production, large investment in drainage infrastructure, grain dryer serves both this area and "rural lands"

"Rural Lands" – There are 10 livestock farms, a local abattoir and veterinary clinic

3. Share ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts

The AIA needs to consider how the settlement area boundary expansion can avoid, minimize and mitigate on farmland, operations and the surrounding area and within the Greater Golden Horseshoe, on the Agricultural System.

Avoiding impacts should be the first priority, then minimize then mitigating.

Objective	Mitigation Measure	Description
Avoid the fragmentation and loss of agricultural land	Select Alternative Locations	Evaluate alternative locations to give preference to locations where prime agricultural areas are avoided, where possible
Minimize	Select alternative locations with the least amount of impact and put mitigation measures in place	Evaluate alternative locations and select areas with the least amount of fragmentation, loss of agricultural land and that have lower priority lands. Put mitigation measures in place e.g. edge planning, phasing
Mitigate	Where alternative locations can not be selected, put mitigation measures in place (e.g. buffers, education and awareness)	Where higher priority agricultural lands can not be avoided, steps to minimize and mitigate impacts