Social Marketing Research On Stewardship Practices Of Rural Non-farm Landowners In The Credit River Watershed

CBSM Strategy Report
Credit Valley Conservation
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Credit Valley Conservation
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ABSTRACT

Credit Valley Conservation has undertaken a social marketing research study to inform the development of a renewed outreach program for rural landowners. Despite the many opportunities to participate in stewardship activities and programs, widespread implementation of stewardship action among landowners in the Credit River Watershed is low. The research findings demonstrate that there are a number of key barriers that prevent landowners from engaging in stewardship behaviours, such as not knowing about the programs available, not having enough time or money, or feeling like it requires too much effort. Many landowners also feel overwhelmed by their large properties and are unsure of where to start. Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) is an approach to social research and planning that recognizes the barriers to behaviour change and provides solutions for overcoming these barriers using key tools and best practices, including personal contact, prompts and reminders and social norm development. Using the fundamentals of CBSM, this report summarizes the research conducted and provides recommendations for encouraging desired stewardship behaviours among rural, non-farm landowners in the Credit River Watershed.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

The vast majority of the Credit River Watershed’s lands and waters are under private ownership. The health and long term protection of this important resource is therefore largely dependent on the individual actions of landowners. Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) currently administers a rural, non-farm stewardship program, which supports and encourages rural landowners to conduct environmentally sustainable land use practices.

Despite the obvious importance and benefits of landowner stewardship and the many opportunities available to landowners to take action, widespread implementation of stewardship programming and engagement with landowners is challenging. Research on the subject has consistently found that there are several key barriers to reaching landowners with appropriate information, generating awareness, and moving them into action.

CVC has embarked on a social marketing research study to inform the development of a renewed outreach program with the goal of encouraging and enabling rural, non-farm property owners to engage in appropriate stewardship behaviours on their properties. CVC has embraced behaviour change as an effective means to enhance stewardship of the Credit River Watershed. The research study and future direction for the outreach strategies utilises Community-based Social Marketing (CBSM) principles. An overview of CBSM fundamentals and best practices is included in Appendix A. CBSM tools, strategies and proven best practices have been used as a way to understand the barriers to stewardship and recommend solutions to promote behaviour change among landowners and move them towards actions that protect and enhance the land and water within the Credit River Watershed.

1.1 WHAT IS LANDOWNER STEWARDSHIP?

According to Stewardship Canada, ‘stewardship’ is a shared responsibility between organizations, communities and individuals to manage and protect our environment and ecosystems (Stewardship Canada, 2011). When it comes to landowners, stewardship is about acceptance of the responsibility to manage and protect the natural environment on one’s property, as well as taking action to do so. Stewardship is therefore both an
ethic and an action by which landowners care for the land, water and air today, and for
generations to come.

1.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDOWNER STEWARDSHIP – LITERATURE REVIEW

Many research studies have been conducted to determine the factors affecting
landowner stewardship behaviours. A brief overview of the existing research provides a
good foundation for this research study. Consistently, research has found that most
rural landowners exhibit a strong stewardship ethic, whether based upon personal,
cultural, or religious/spiritual considerations. It is common for rural landowners to value
nature, and be sympathetic to environmental issues and concerns (Hilts, 1993;
Environics, 2000; Ryan, Erickson, and De Young, 2003; Brown and Harris, 2005).

Research has found that there are often knowledge gaps that prevent landowners from
practicing stewardship (Environics, 2003). Another study of rural riparian landowners
determined that financial motivations, past behaviours, exposure to government
information and self-efficacy were contributing factors in intention to participate in
conservation programs (Corbett, 2002). These findings suggest that lack of knowledge,
external constraints, and social barriers (such as financial variables) are important
moderators of perceived behavioural control and deserve closer scrutiny.

The Feasibility Assessment of Afforestation Carbon Sequestration (FAACS) Ontario
Pilot Project and several partners hosted a series of landowner workshops to determine
the key factors in participation in their programs (Eastern Ontario Model Forest, 2003).
The workshop found that:

- A program must have long term stability
- The delivery agent should be an existing, trusted, locally based agency or
  organization
- Respect for the management objectives and property rights of participating
  landowners is essential and recognition for landowner involvement is necessary
  (i.e. on-property signage)
- An extensive and flexible financial assistance package for landowners is
  necessary

A survey of landowners in South-Western and South-Central Ontario, conducted by
Hardy Stevenson and Associates (2003) found that financial incentives are most
desirable for encouraging landowners to conduct tree planting, while technical
assistance with planting and other tasks are less popular incentives. It was also found
that the local stewardship context made a great difference for landowner responses (Knight, 2006).

A key study on stewardship was conducted in 2006 by Lee-Anne Milburn and the results were compiled in a report published by the University of Guelph, Rural by Choice: Southern Ontario’s Rural Non-Farm Landowners. The research study included focus groups and a questionnaire that explored priorities, communication, and issues relating to stewardship and conservation, as well as the key barriers to participation in existing stewardship programs. The results of the focus groups demonstrated that the most significant barriers to conservation initiatives were information and labour. The survey responses found that money, time, and governmental issues were also barriers to stewardship. Participants of the study prioritized additional money or financial assistance as key sources of support and highlighted that financial assistance alone is unlikely to address the challenge of private land stewardship. For receiving information about land management, respondents identified in-person interactions as the preferred method.

1.3 THE GAP BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

Another key area of interest for this project is the gap between knowledge and action. Often people’s beliefs and knowledge about a particular subject are inconsistent with their actions. This is especially true for environmental issues. While traditional communication and outreach can be effective at raising awareness of such issues, they are often ineffective at fostering sustainable behaviour change; numerous studies document that behaviour change rarely occurs as a result of simply providing information (Geller, 1981; Geller, Erickson and Buttram, 1983; Midden, Meter, Weenig, and Zieverink, 1983; Jordan, Hungerford and Tomera, 1986; Schultz, 2002; Environment Canada, 2006). CBSM is a practical, hands-on approach, based on social and psychological research that recognises the barriers to behaviour change, provides solutions for overcoming these barriers, and emphasizes direct contact with community members.

2.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to understand how to best encourage rural, non-farm property owners within the Credit River Watershed to undertake stewardship projects and engage in stewardship behaviours on their property. The research sought to:
• Assess the rural, non-farm landowners’ attitudes, perceptions, and awareness of environmental stewardship actions and CVC’s programs
• Assess knowledge of and concern for local environmental issues
• Determine target behaviours
• Determine target audiences for behaviour change
• Determine the perceived barriers and benefits to undertaking selected stewardship behaviours
• Identify communications preferences and key information sources of the target audience.

Within the context of the research conducted, five specific stewardship areas were selected to examine in further detail:

• Septic system management
• Creating vegetative buffers around streams, rivers and ponds
• Mitigating or removing online ponds
• Planting native species
• Invasive plants management.

These topic areas represent areas of programming within CVC and priorities for rural non-farm landowner stewardship. The research outcomes on these topic areas propose potential target behaviours, perceived benefits and barriers, and motivators for behaviour uptake.

3.0 APPROACH AND METHODS

A combined quantitative-qualitative research approach was utilized for this study, conducted during the months of January 2011 to June 2011\(^1\). The target audience for the research was rural, non-farm property owners located within the Credit River Watershed with properties one acre or greater in size. It is estimated that there are about 6600 households within the Credit River Watershed that fall within these criteria. This estimate is based on a count of parcels of land 1 acre or greater, less the number of farm properties, in the 11 rural sub-watersheds.

The research involved a two-phased approach. In the first phase a telephone survey, two focus groups, and opinion leader interviews were conducted. These methods examined landowner attitudes, perceptions and awareness concerning stewardship

\(^1\) Additional surveys were conducted in December 2011 and January 2012 to address an area missed in the first survey.
actions and CVC programs; the barriers and benefits to engaging in stewardship behaviours; and communication preferences and sources of information regarding stewardship actions. In the second phase a final focus group further investigated the findings from phase I and explored potential strategies for reaching out to rural non-farm landowners in the Credit River Watershed.

3.1 TELEPHONE SURVEY

The telephone survey component of this research study was carried out during March 2011. A random selection of households was contacted by telephone, ensuring that there was an accurate representation of the target population, while avoiding sampling biases. Surveys were conducted from a total of 250 residents within the Credit River Watershed that met the criteria. This sample size provided statistically significant quantitative data and an accuracy of +/- 6%, 19 times out of 20. It is noted that the results of the survey showed a higher proportion of participants that were located within the N0B postal code, which primarily includes the Town of Erin. The L7K postal code, which includes portions of Caledon was erroneously screened out during the survey sampling process. To help offset this variation, an additional 20 surveys were conducted within the L7K postal code that was lacking. A full summary of the telephone survey results can be found in the Research Summary Report, Lura Consulting (April 2012).

3.2 FOCUS GROUPS

The first two sessions conducted during phase I of the project, engaged participants and non-participants of CVC stewardship programs. Non-participants were recruited from the telephone survey. The third focus group was held in the second phase of the research and contained a mixture of participants from the first two focus groups with a purpose of testing potential stewardship strategies. The focus groups provided an opportunity for in-depth discussion on issues, perceptions and behaviours of landowners, complementing the quantitative telephone survey. A full summary of the first two focus groups can be found in the Research Summary Report, Lura Consulting (April 2012) and a summary of the third focus group in Appendix B.

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2 The results of these additional surveys were cross referenced with the original surveys to identify any major variations. The results are consistent with the other survey findings.
3.3 OPINION LEADER INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews were conducted with 21 individuals identified as influential and/or knowledgeable about stewardship in the Credit River Watershed community. The interviews were approximately 20-30 minutes long and followed a list of questions developed to reflect the research objectives. The results of the interviews provided valuable insight into the broader community perspectives on stewardship activities. A full summary of the opinion leader interviews can be found in the Research Summary Report, Lura Consulting (April 2012).

3.4 CASE EXAMPLE REVIEW

A review of relevant stewardship programs and initiatives was conducted in order to provide additional insight into stewardship planning strategies, generate ideas and to demonstrate precedence for recommendations. The review looked at programs associated with the key topic areas and examined key themes, successes and strengths. Programs that utilised CBSM tools and strategies were given preference.

4.0 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following provides a brief overview of the research findings from the telephone survey, focus groups, and opinion leader interviews. A more detailed summary of the data can be found in the Research Summary Report.

4.1 LEVEL OF AWARENESS AND CURRENT PRACTICE

The majority of landowners in the Credit River Watershed do not participate in stewardship activities. The telephone survey found that 35% had participated in stewardship activities, and 64% had not participated. For those involved in stewardship activities, tree planting was found to be most common. The popularity of tree planting appears to be the result of the multiple tree planting programs in place, good advertising, and the significant financial discounts available.

Tax incentive programs were also popular among landowners. According to the telephone survey, 17% of respondents had participated in the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program and 9% in the Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program. It was noted that in the opinion leader interviews and the focus groups, that some members of
the community take a much more active role in maintaining their properties in an environmentally responsible way than others.

When asked to identify specific programs run by CVC, there was little knowledge among most landowners. Tree planting was the most commonly known activity (20%), followed by education programs (4%), habitat rehabilitation/restoration (2%), and Source Water Protection (2%).

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**Caring for the Credit: Landowner Stewardship Program**

Credit Valley Conservation’s Caring for the Credit Landowner Stewardship Program helps landowners understand their property and provides tips, tools and resources for land and water management. The following services and programs are provided:

- **Caring for Your Land & Water Workshop** – Entry into the Landowner Stewardship Program typically starts by attending the Caring for Your Land & Water workshop. At this workshop, landowners receive aerial photos and maps showing the important natural areas and features on their property. Landowners are introduced to the issues facing the Credit River Watershed and learn how their land connects to the larger issues and solutions.

  All workshop participants receive a copy of *Your Guide to Caring for the Credit* – a specially designed manual developed for the rural landowner that helps them create an action plan for addressing issues on their property.

  Landowners can also co-host their own workshop with CVC.

- **Property Site Visits** – Caring for Your Land & Water – workshop participants are eligible to sign-up for a site visit with a CVC Stewardship Coordinator.

- **Specialized Workshops** – These advanced workshops are designed for landowners who have particular areas of interest that require expert advice.

- **Caring for the Credit Laneway Sign** – Landowners who take on-the-ground action by completing a stewardship project receive a free Caring for the Credit sign to place on their lawns.

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Despite the low level of participation and awareness of stewardship activities, awareness and concern for environmental issues was high. The telephone survey found that when landowners were asked to rate their level of concern regarding a number of environmental issues, the most common response for all issues was the highest available rating (5 out of 5). Saving the environment for future generations received the highest average ranking of 4.5 out of 5. Other major concerns included drinking water quality (4.44/5), species at risk/endangered species (4.14/5), air pollution (4.13/5), effects of pesticides and fertilizers (4.0/5), and gas/oil spills or leaks (3.98/5).
Figure 1 - Survey Results Indicating Level of Concern for Various Environmental Issues

Focus group and opinion leader interview participants had many similar concerns. Development and its effects on their community, such as air, light and noise pollution was one of the most significant concerns for focus group participants. Garbage dumping along trails and side of roads and aggregate mining were other concerns identified in both the focus groups. In addition to the concerns already mentioned, water quality, sewage treatment and septic systems were also expressed as concerns by opinion leader interviews. There was also a significant level of concern for climate change and the impacts it may have on the community.

4.2 BENEFITS

A key component of CBSM research is to identify the perceived benefits to taking part in a particular activity. In other words, the goal is to understand what people feel are the advantages of conducting a behaviour. What people perceive as benefits is therefore important for developing successful programs and appropriate key messaging. According to the research results, the main benefit of taking part in stewardship
activities is preserving the health of the natural environment. This demonstrates that landowners have strong environmental values and a sense of responsibility to maintain their property for future generations. From speaking with focus group participants and opinion leaders, it can also be concluded that there is a sense of pride involved in protecting one’s land and water.

Another benefit to conducting stewardship activities identified in the research is the presence of wildlife. Landowners get great enjoyment out of seeing wildlife on their properties and want to ensure that the existing species remain over the long term. Other benefits of stewardship identified were aesthetic beauty, peace and tranquility. There is a strong appreciation of the rural landscape and the lifestyles of living in a rural community. The rolling landscape, clean air, clear and quiet nights are important to landowners and for many are what attracted them to the area. Countryside living was a term landowners felt encompassed these lifestyle elements that they value about their community.

4.3 BARRIERS

Understanding what prevents people from conducting a particular behaviour is important for developing effective programming. Barriers to a sustainable behaviour may be internal to an individual, such as one’s lack of knowledge, non-supportive attitudes or an absence of motivation. Barriers may also reside outside the individual, such as changes that need to be made in order for the behaviour to be more convenient (e.g., providing curbside organic collection service) or affordable (e.g., subsidizing public transit or compost units). Multiple barriers likely prevent landowners from conducting stewardship activities on their property.

According to the telephone survey, approximately one-third (32%) of landowners who did not participate in stewardship activities did not know what programs and activities were available. This demonstrates that awareness of stewardship opportunities is a major barrier. Focus group and opinion leader interview participants also suggested that there is lack of knowledge of available programs, despite an interest in such activities. The opinion leader interviews identified a lack of knowledge in the following areas:

- How to care for one’s property
- Understanding of the need for environmental management
- How actions can have a broader impact beyond their property boundaries
- Where to go for information.
The research findings also demonstrated that some landowners are not interested in taking part in stewardship activities. According to the survey, 16% of landowners that are not currently involved in stewardship activities reported that they are not taking action simply because they are not interested.

Not thinking that any actions were required was also a key barrier. Opinion leader interviewees suggested that those who are aware of environmental issues often do not take the time or consideration when it comes to stewardship of their properties. There was a concern that many citizens do not see the impact of their actions and therefore are unaware of the potential problems they may be causing.

Not having enough time (12%) and the amount of work involved (4%) was also identified in the survey as a common barrier to engaging in stewardship actions by landowners that are currently not participating in stewardship programs. Focus group and opinion leader discussions noted that those who commute, work a lot or have families to take care of often do not have the time to take on big projects.

Another key barrier identified in the third focus group session was that taking care of one’s property was overwhelming. There are too many choices and actions which are overwhelming for individual households. In other words, too many choices are leading landowners to not make a choice at all.

### 4.4 MOTIVATORS

Understanding what motivates landowners to conduct stewardship activities is important for developing campaigns to foster action. The strongest motivators according to the telephone survey are tax incentives or financial assistance. Focus group and opinion leader interviewees consistently reported that providing discounts was important as they reduced the financial stress that can be involved with making changes to a property and also helped to gain their attention. This finding is also consistent with survey data; the programs most used by landowners currently are incentive programs. Other key motivators include:

- Assistance with physical labour – according to the telephone survey, 50% of landowners would be motivated to take action on their property if assistance with physical labour was offered. As noted in the focus group sessions, landowners often do not have the time or physical ability to conduct major projects on their property. Assistance with physical labour is therefore important, especially for higher intensity projects.
• One-on-one assistance – all three research methods identified that one-on-one advice from experts was very valuable and would effectively motivate them to take action. Focus group participants noted that large properties are difficult to manage and landowners don’t always know what needs to be done. Personalised education with property owners delivered on their property would help them to determine the appropriate stewardship activities specific to their property. Also, people are much more likely to remember something and carry through with a behaviour if they have had a personal discussion about it, tailored to their specific needs.

• More detailed information about individual properties – landowners appreciate when they receive information that is specific to their property and the particular issues and concerns they have. This finding was supported particularly by the focus group sessions, where participants noted that everyone’s properties have different features and require different types of management activities. Information specific to their property would help them to identify issues that are relevant to them. Focus group participants also frequently mentioned a previous initiative that allowed landowners to have a book created specifically for their property, describing its history and the natural features. They liked this initiative because it contained personalised information and created a sense of connection and pride with one’s property.

• Opportunity to work with others in the area – the research findings from all three methods identified the importance of working with others in the community, especially those who have similar interests or concerns about their property. People can share information as well as labour and/or costs. This approach to stewardship is appropriate as the research shows many people in the Credit River Watershed have strong connections to their community. Also, when working with others, people have an obligation to follow through and seeing others undertaking stewardship actions helps to normalise the behaviours.

4.5 KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION OF CREDIT VALLEY CONSERVATION

The majority of survey respondents were aware of CVC’s role in protecting local ecosystems, wildlife and natural habitat and appreciative of the difference they are trying to make. It was also apparent however, that some people and groups in the community are wary of CVC and feel they are too regulatory and cause problems for property owners. During an opinion leader interview, one participant referred to interactions with CVC as “a double edged sword” where they may be helpful to environmental initiatives, but a hindrance to private landowners. This perception is a
significant barrier for CVC to engage landowners to take actions on their properties. This is a particular concern that should be addressed considering the finding that residents would be motivated by one-on-one visits with experts. If staff were to visit landowners on their properties, the effectiveness of the approach may be reduced by mistrust.

4.6 INFORMATION SOURCES

The survey results demonstrate that landowners use and trust a range of information sources. The top five information sources according to the telephone survey were newspaper/TV/radio (51%), Internet (48%), conservation authority (46%), neighbours/family/friends (39%) and handbooks or guides (37%). The internet and property site visits by an expert were rated more highly as effective ways to reach rural landowners, followed by mail outs, brochures and booklets, local community newsletters, newspapers, and information booths at local events.

The focus group and opinion leader research supported the findings of the telephone survey. The Internet as an information resource was discussed in detail. Participants found it to be an especially effective source of information, especially electronic newsletters, social media and online information materials. Factsheets, information booths at local events, or local publications were also noted in the focus group sessions.

Focus group participants also suggested that information can spread through informal networks within the community. Opinion leader interview participants further confirmed the value of learning about issues from friends, neighbours and family members.

4.7 SEPTIC SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

The research findings indicate that most landowners are knowledgeable about their septic systems and generally conduct on-going maintenance. Landowners were most successful at ‘not putting toxic chemicals down the drain’ (97%) and least successful at having the tank inspected every 3 years (64%). The focus group research results suggest that there may be some misperceptions about septic systems, such as how often a tank should be pumped, inspected and what substances should and shouldn’t go into a septic system. Also, according to the focus group participants, newcomers moving to the area from more urban locales may not be aware of their responsibilities regarding septic system maintenance.
Benefits: The main benefits of maintaining one’s septic system are that it affects the natural environment of the region and contributes to the protection of drinking water. Preventative maintenance is also a key benefit; landowners want to protect their property and avoid additional costs in the future.

Barriers: According to the survey results, the majority of respondents do not identify any barriers to maintaining their septic systems properly. Of the few respondents who did, they identified problems with the physical/mechanical characteristics of the system (4%) and maintenance/repair issues (4%). Additionally, not knowing enough about maintaining the septic system was a barrier identified by 3% of respondents with septic systems. The survey results found that landowners are least knowledgeable about how often to have their septic system inspected (only 64% had the tank inspected every 3 years). A future area for research would be to examine the length of time between inspections, the age of the systems, and the frequency of repairs and replacements. Focus group discussions noted that residents who are new to the area and do not have previous experience with septic systems are often the least knowledgeable about septic system maintenance and that knowledge is gained in an ad hoc basis, through conversations with neighbours, friends and service providers.

Motivators: Financial incentives are the greatest motivator for landowners to maintain their septic systems according to the necessary guidelines (10%). Education initiatives such as factsheets, brochures, workshops and one-on-one consultations were also cited. The survey results also found that 37% of respondents ‘don’t know’ what would motivate them to maintain their septic systems.

Current programs: A septic systems factsheet can be found on CVC’s website and in the Caring for the Credit Guide. Septic system information is also promoted at local events. In the past, CVC has conducted some education and training with service providers.

The septic system factsheet and other materials are not easily accessible for landowners. Individuals, especially newcomers, may not find this information on CVC’s website. Only 36% of landowners surveyed have visited CVC’s website in the past and the factsheet is not likely to come up on a general Internet search.

4.8 CREATING VEGETATIVE BUFFERS

Many landowners had conducted at least one action associated with the creation of a buffer along a stream, river or pond. For example, the telephone survey found that the most common behaviours were to allow natural growth (76%) or to refrain from mowing.
or cropping near the water feature (53%). About one third (31%) of landowners planted native shrubs/trees/grasses along the water feature.

**Benefits:** About 8% of respondents did not realize buffers were important. This is one indication of a poor understanding of the benefits of creating buffers. Survey results also found that 26% of respondents were ‘not sure of the benefits – they just felt it was the right thing to do’; however, another 27% were aware that cleaner water in streams and lakes was a benefit. Erosion control and improved wildlife habitat were other benefits cited.

**Barriers:** The most common barrier according to the research results was an aesthetic dislike of buffers. Knowledge of the benefits of buffers and how to create one was another issue. Survey and focus group participants also noted that this type of project is perceived as being too much work.

**Motivators:** Financial assistance to cover the cost of plants was the most common motivator identified in the survey results. Having personalised, expert advice or visiting a demonstration site were also found to be motivating factors in both the survey and focus group results, suggesting landowners need assistance with their buffer projects. A community based buffer project was noted as a motivator in the survey responses and was identified as a motivator by focus group participants.

**Current Programs:** CVC provides several programs and funding opportunities for revegetation projects. Tree planting services and materials are available to eligible landowners at a reduced cost. The programs are offered in partnership with various municipalities and community organizations. Free site visits can be arranged with technical staff for an assessment of restoration potential and rehabilitation options for stream, pond and wetland features. Planting rehabilitation projects may qualify for provincial or federal funding and technical support depending on the ecological benefits. There are a number of requirements for landowners to be eligible to receive the discounts on trees and the free technical assistance. For example, plant materials are not to be planted within 15 metres (50 ft.) of a residence, landowners must own at least 2 acres of land, they must buy a minimum number of plants and all planting through CVC’s Private Tree Planting Service must be carried out in accordance with an approved plan as developed jointly by the landowner and CVC staff. Landowners who take part in the tree planting program receive a Caring for the Credit sign. They may also qualify for tax benefits if their property becomes eligible for the Managed Forest Tax Incentive program.

The discount on tree planting materials and free technical support are a strong financial incentive for landowners; however, the results of tree planting initiatives are often not
immediately obvious or visible to the landowner. The Caring for the Credit sign, although valuable for the purposes of public commitment and social norm development, does not express specifically what has been accomplished and therefore does not address the promotion of particular behaviours. Also, the many restrictions limit the number of landowners who participate and may confuse landowners about their eligibility.

4.9 MITIGATING OR REMOVING ONLINE PONDS

Approximately one quarter (27%) of telephone survey respondents have a pond on their property, and 5% identified themselves as having an online pond (4% were unsure whether their pond was online). According to the survey, in order to lessen the impact of their online ponds, landowners are most likely to ‘naturalise their pond by adding native plants and habitat structures for wildlife’. They are least open to removing their ponds. This finding demonstrates that landowners are attached to their ponds and there will be challenges in asking landowners to voluntarily remove their ponds; modifications, while still maintaining the pond are more likely behaviours to target.

Benefits: Landowners with an online pond perceived the positive impact to fish and wildlife as the greatest benefit to modifying their online pond. Improved water quality was another perceived benefit.

Barriers: The main barriers to addressing online ponds are knowledge of the environmental issues associated with them. Since some landowners also identified that they enjoyed using their pond for recreational purposes and enjoyed the aesthetics, concern about losing these aspects is a barrier. Both financial and labour resources required to remove a pond was also a concern, as noted in both the survey results and focus group discussions. Focus group participants also noted that there is a general lack of clarity on what would be required to take a pond offline and what the result would be.

Motivators: Incentives, especially financial, was identified as a factor that would help motivate landowners to modify their online pond. Assistance with physical labour would also encourage some people.

Current Programs: CVC provides some funding and physical assistance to remove or address pond issues where the ecological benefit is significant. Federal and provincial funding programs may also apply. CVC provides information and advice to property owners with aquatic features through various venues including workshops, community events and one-on-one site visits; however, the funding opportunities and options for addressing online ponds are not always clear to individual landowners.
4.10 PLANTING NATIVE SPECIES

The majority of landowners report that they have planted some native species on their properties. For example, nearly two-thirds (63%) of telephone survey respondents indicated that they had planted native species on their property. Approximately 40% of those respondents planted native species in their gardens, and 24% planted them adjacent to a natural area as part of a buffer, and almost 18% planted them as fence rows, hedge rows, windbreaks, shelterbelts, or along the borders of their property.

Benefits: Landowners strongly value having an attractive yard and having wildlife, such as birds and butterflies on their property. Reducing maintenance and associated costs is an additional benefit according to the survey and focus group results. Environmental benefits were also important to some landowners. For example, the telephone survey found that 26% of landowners that had previously planted native species felt ‘increasing tree cover’ was a benefit. Other common answers showing appreciation of the environmental benefits were ‘restoring natural connections’ (14%), creating better soil quality,’ (10%), ‘protect and restore native biodiversity’ (6%) and ‘helps to reduce the impacts of global climate change and increasing temperatures’ (6%). Seventeen percent of landowners planting native species also recognized their suitability to local conditions, resulting in better success with plant survival and growth.

Barriers: Some landowners are less appreciative of the benefits of planting locally appropriate natives or do not know which plants would suit their property’s natural characteristics and still meet their objectives. The telephone survey found that 8% of respondents don’t know what native species are. Availability of attractive, affordable and interesting locally appropriate native species is also a barrier, as noted in the survey, as well as the focus group discussions. Another response (15%) was that landowners feel that they ‘have enough trees/plants on the property and there is no need for or room for more”. Other barriers related to the time required for planting and concerns about maintenance.

Motivators: Financial incentives or affordable prices would be the strongest motivator for landowners to purchase native plants. Educational workshops and presentations that would help landowners plant native species and meet their personal objectives for their property were also identified as a motivator for some people. Reducing the need for watering and less maintenance is also important to landowners. Twenty percent of landowners felt nothing would motivate them to plant natives.

Current Programs: CVC’s Your Green Yard Program provides workshops and other resources to help landowners make their yard more natural. The focus is on ecological landscaping and gardening, specifically native plant gardening; environmental
maintenance; and green outdoor building. Workshop participants can also signup for a free native plant or tree. This program is not available for rural areas; however, existing materials and processes could be adapted for the purposes of engaging rural landowners. Various factsheets and educational resources regarding planting natives are also available on the CVC website, such as “Landscaping for Wildlife” and “How to Create a Bird Friendly Garden”.

Workshops are a great way to educate people and provide the one-on-one assistance that many landowners value; however, workshops appeal to and are convenient for a particular demographic of people. As the research has suggested, many people are too busy or do not want to commit to attending events. Factsheets, although valuable for educational purposes, can be impersonal and are unlikely to inspire behaviour change if a landowner is not already interested or committed to the subject. Also, local nurseries need to be engaged in this area of outreach. They need to be knowledgeable and help landowners at the point of purchase and they need to have interesting, locally appropriate species available.

4.11 INVASIVE PLANTS MANAGEMENT

Many landowners in the Credit River Watershed recognize invasive plants as an issue; however, according to the research, knowledge of specific invasive plants is very low. Forty six percent of respondents were unfamiliar with what invasive plants might be a problem for their area. The most commonly known species according to the telephone survey was Giant Hogweed (14%), then Garlic Mustard (4%) and Periwinkle (3%).

Benefits: According to survey respondents, preventing the spread of invasive plants was important in order to protect biodiversity and habitat. They also felt that the problem would get worse if not addressed.

Barriers: The main barriers that prevent landowners from identifying invasive plants on their property are awareness of their existence and the ability to identify them. The telephone survey found that either respondents were unaware that invasive plants are a problem (12%) or they do not think they are a problem (13%); thirteen percent did not know what to do to assess their property for invasives, and another 12% said ‘there weren’t any invasive plants on their property’. Focus group participants also noted that they were not clear about which plant species on their property were invasive and would have a hard time identifying them.

Motivators: The survey found that education and materials to help with identification would encourage landowners to conduct stewardship activities associated with invasive
plants (31%). Expert assistance or having someone identify the plants for them was also cited (15%). Focus group participants noted that easy to use manuals would be helpful. Approximately one-third of survey respondents also stated that ‘nothing’ would motivate them to assess their property for invasive species, likely indicating that there is a lack of understanding of the significance of the invasive plants problem and the benefits to removing them. More education is needed to change such perceptions.

**Current Programs:** Information and advice on invasive species management is currently available through various avenues including online resources on CVC’s website, workshops and presentations, in response to individual inquiries and at community events. Technical assistance in the form of site visits is also conducted by CVC Outreach staff. Rehabilitation projects may qualify for funding and/or technical support depending on the ecological benefits.

These programs provide valuable resources for addressing invasive species. A potential gap however, is that these activities cater to landowners who are already aware and concerned about invasive species on their property. Before landowners become interested in the workshops, presentations, and technical assistance, they must be educated about the issue of invasive species on their property and understand the implications. Since workshops require a specific time commitment, those landowners who identified time and effort as a barrier may not be as likely to attend.

### 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 TARGET AUDIENCE

Based on the research findings, some guidance can be provided for CVC stewardship programming. The following provides suggestions to assist CVC with targeted landowner stewardship programming:

- Utilize landowners who are heavily involved in stewardship activities within the Credit River Watershed – these individuals and groups can be leveraged to demonstrate to others what can be done and help to achieve social diffusion of stewardship action in the Credit River Watershed and develop social norms.
- Target those who are interested but lack sufficient knowledge to undertake a stewardship action.
- Reach new audiences – those landowners who are completely unaware of CVC’s programs should be targeted.
The research findings suggest that there are several sub-groups of landowners with different common behaviours and characteristics. Particular attention should be paid to the following target audiences:

- Newcomers who are not aware of their responsibilities as rural landowners – the telephone survey showed a trend in stewardship participation that indicated low participation within the first five years of property ownership, which increased after five years of ownership, and even more so after 10 years. The survey indicated that over 80% of landowners that owned their property for five years or less have not participated in land or water restoration/protection activities and 68% had not planted native trees, both figures that decrease significantly with years of ownership. Similarly, the focus group participants identified that families and individuals moving from other non-rural areas often lack knowledge and awareness of stewardship issues. Simple actions like tree planting may be good first steps to engage new landowners in stewardship activities.

- An under 40 audience – the survey identified a trend amongst respondents that were under 40 years of age being significantly less likely to participate in the planting of native trees. This trend may be in part due to those under 40 being more likely to have young children and less financial resources and time available – common barriers to participating in stewardship activities that were identified in the survey. More research into the factors influencing decisions to engage in stewardship activities amongst residents under 40 for specific stewardship behaviours would be valuable.

- Individuals who have limited free time and/or limited financial resources – as noted in the focus group and telephone survey, these can be limiting factors in stewardship participation. Efforts should be made to include and accommodate these audiences.

5.2 OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STEWARDSHIP ACTION

5.2.1 Seeking Commitments
Recommendation #1: Provide varying commitment options and seek progressive commitments from landowners. CBSM research shows that once people make a commitment to one activity, they are not only more likely to follow through and take action; they are also more likely to agree to more demanding commitments in the future. Once a person has completed an easy task they
change their self-perception to being a person who does undertake these activities. As a result they become more likely to move towards more difficult tasks.

It will be important to provide rural landowners with a range of commitment options with varying levels of effort. This way they can start with something easy and eventually move on to the more difficult tasks later on. Smaller, easier projects will make it easier for those that feel overwhelmed by their properties, as well as help accommodate those who do not have enough time or money to participate in larger projects.

Similarly this ‘small commitment’ approach can be used at all points of interaction with the public, such as when speaking to people at a CVC booth at community events, or when approaching a landowner on their property. For example, starting off a conversation asking for a simple commitment, like “can I speak with you for a minute about some of our programs?” or “would you like to tell us what you do to be a good steward of your property?” Once someone makes this small commitment to speak with you, they are more likely to make a larger commitment, such as engaging in a stewardship behaviour.

**Recommendation #2:** Each time contact is made with landowners (at workshops, events, by email, etc.) seek out a verbal, written and/or public commitment from them. Public commitments are much stronger than written commitments, which in turn are much stronger than verbal commitments. Commitment strategies should always try to take the best advantage of this commitment hierarchy. The research findings, particularly the results of the focus groups, show that adults are not driven by outright social pressure or pressure from authorities to conduct a particular behaviour. What is more likely to encourage behaviour change is if a landowner makes a moral commitment to do something they have a personal connection with, or if they have made a public commitment to others in their neighbourhood. It is therefore recommended that CVC staff should seek less specific and binding commitments from landowners, and instead seek more general moral commitments. They should also encourage public and group commitments wherever possible.

- **A Verbal commitment** can be gained by having presenters at the end of a presentation or workshop ask if they can be counted on to take part in our stewardship program or engage in the behaviour that the workshop was on. The question can be quite simple, such as “So, now that you know more about what landowner stewardship is all about, and how each of us can make a difference, can we count on you to do x on your property?” A simple request for a show of hands can be enough. Verbal commitments should also be
sought when attending events and engaging one-on-one with landowners in the community.

- **Written commitments** can be gained immediately after the activity above by having the staff member say he or she is collecting a list of people who have agreed to take action on their property, and asking people to add their name to the list. By asking for people to sign a list resembling a petition, the verbal commitment can be turned into a written commitment as the person signs his or her name and provides contact information. A social pressure is also felt when someone sees the names of all the other people that have also made a commitment. See Appendix C for an example of a written commitment sheet that could be used.

- **Public commitments** can be obtained by adding a little check-box to the above sign-up commitment sheet that grants permission for the person’s name to be included on a website that is intended to show the number of people making the commitment to take action on their property. A list of names of those landowners that made a commitment can then be posted on the website and each person sent an email thanking them and telling them that they can see their name on the long list of people making a difference. When they see that their commitment is posted there for all to see, it is much more likely that they will follow through with the behaviour to fulfil their commitment. This long list of people committed to stewardship also shows that many people are committed and helps to create a social norm around stewardship and encourage others to take action.

- **Online commitments** can also be made by allowing people to sign up online. This can be accomplished simply by developing a web form, storing the submitted information in a database, and then outputting the information on another page of the website, or on a scrolling marquee.

- **Group commitments**: Wherever possible, seek commitments from groups of people that are highly cohesive, such as a church or a neighbourhood group. The research findings suggest that having made a commitment to others that they know or have close ties with, increased the likelihood that they will follow through with their commitment. This is also a way to increase the number of commitments at one time.

**Recommendation #3: Increase presence at community events in order to gather commitments, build a database of contacts and raise CVC’s public profile.** Gathering commitments is a substantial effort, but it pays off with proven results. To effectively gather commitments in quantities that make a difference, CVC should attend local events with commitment cards, or a commitment sign-up sheet.
CVC needs to go where landowners go. Attending community events is also important for expanding CVC’s current database of contacts, which can be used to distribute information about stewardship issues, programs, and events. Email should be a key source of communication with landowners in the future. It is also a way to improve knowledge of CVC programs, interact with members of the community and become better known as a trusted resource.

5.2.2 The Countryside Stewards
Recommendation #4: Maintain an ongoing list of landowners called the ‘Credit Countryside Stewards’ that have made a commitment to a stewardship behaviour or behaviours. The Credit Countryside Stewards should be an informal collection of landowners who have made a written commitment to stewardship behaviours as outlined above. Having a collection of people committed to protecting the Credit River Watershed strengthens the public commitment and gives people a sense of belonging by being part of something bigger than just the actions they take on their own properties. The total number of people that have made a commitment to a stewardship action should be displayed to encourage others to take stewardship actions. This could be a running total on the website and used in publications, such as newsletters or Tweeting updates. The tag line for the people that have committed to be stewards could be “iProtect the Credit” or “Committed to Protecting the Credit”.

As a landowner committed to protecting the Credit, landowners should receive educational information, program updates, coupons, information on events, and other special privileges. Special privileges could include free workshops, tours, invitations to speaker series, opportunities to host “garden parties”, discounts on goods and services (e.g. septic system services, sales on native plants at nurseries, etc.). This group would provide CVC with a) a vehicle for communicating with landowners and promoting stewardship programs and activities; b) a mechanism for developing social norms and social diffusion around landowner stewardship c) a way to consistently remind landowners of their commitment to ‘protect the Credit’ through ongoing contact.

5.2.3 Key Messaging and Information Sources
Understanding the perceived benefits and motivators to desirable behaviours is useful for developing messaging in CBSM strategies that are most effective to the community (e.g. promotion of certain benefits of stewardship over others). The
research conducted found that rural landowners have a fairly distinct and cohesive set of values in terms of the environment, their property and their lifestyle.

**Recommendation #5: The values and perceived benefits of landowners should be reflected in branding and communication materials.** Through research and discussion with rural landowners in the Credit River Watershed, it is recommended that CVC adapt its current organizational brand and the messaging associated with its landowner stewardship program. The new messaging should reflect landowner values and the perceived benefits of stewardship. It should motivate landowners to take action. CBSM best practices also suggest that presenting communications vividly increases the likelihood of capturing an audience’s attention, while also increasing the likelihood of the information being remembered at a later time.

The key values and benefits to be reflected in key messaging include:

- **Protecting natural heritage, aesthetic beauty, and wildlife.** These concepts are valuable for images and general messaging around stewardship activities.
- **‘Countryside’** – this is a term that encompasses many of the values of rural landowners. It is about a lifestyle and is inclusive of everyone that lives in the rural part of the Credit River Watershed.
- **‘Steward’** – is a word that reflects the true nature of what CVC wants landowners to do. Although not everyone knows the specific definition of stewardship, the research indicates that steward is associated with doing one’s part in protecting the environment for the greater good. It has a connotation of responsibility and action.
- **‘The Credit’** – the research findings confirm that landowners that live in the rural part of the Credit River Watershed are aware that what they do on their properties can affect the ‘Credit River’. ‘Credit’ is a neutral term and does not exclude anyone who may not be aware of their relationship to the river, or who does not feel a strong connection to it.
- **‘I Protect the Credit’ or ‘iProtect’** – a phrase or slogan that landowners felt a strong connection to in focus group testing. It reminds them of their personal commitment to protect the Credit, as well as their connection to the greater whole.

**Recommendation #6: Utilize local newspapers to raise awareness about landowner stewardship issues.** According to the research results, local newspapers are a key information source for landowners in the Credit River watershed. It is therefore recommended that the CVC work with local newspapers,
developing and publishing content that will help increase knowledge and understanding of environmental and stewardship issues. The newspapers could be asked to feature weekly or monthly articles featuring stories of local landowners, projects, or groups, in relation to particular issues. A reoccurring feature would provide ongoing education and build momentum for the CVC stewardship program. This would be an effective way to raise awareness through personalized communication using trusted and effective information sources.

**Recommendation #7: Distribute informational materials through rural realtors and organizations responsible for welcoming newcomers.** Realtors can be given materials about property stewardship to distribute to new homeowners when they are purchasing their home. A simple pamphlet or handbook could be created for newcomers and distributed by realtors. The welcome package, which is distributed locally to all new homeowners in towns and villages in the Credit River Watershed, is another key point of contact for reaching newcomers. The welcome package often includes information about civic issues, and would be a good mechanism for delivering information about stewardship issues.

### 5.2.4 Making Stewardship Action a Social Norm

Changes in social norms happen in small steps over a period of time. As more and more people change their behaviours, those who don’t have more pressure on them to conform. Also, people often mirror their attitudes and behaviour by observing those around them, particularly those people they interact with on a daily basis, such as family or co-workers, or others in the community. Further, word-of-mouth between neighbours and friends is an important way of raising awareness about an issue or program and can act as an effective information source.

A key goal of CVC’s landowner stewardship program should be to create a social norm around stewardship and being proactive in taking care of one’s property.

**Recommendation #8: Undertake a stewardship mapping project in the Credit River Watershed.** Community mapping is becoming an important tool for communities to share information and planning in a collaborative way. The process of mapping community assets or activities help a community to learn about their community, see their place in it, making it an important feedback tool. Mapping can also provide important, dynamic information for decision makers.

It is recommended that CVC create an online stewardship mapping project. Individuals and groups in the community will add their stewardship projects to the online map. There can be options to add a description of the project, before and
after photos, stories, as well as contact information. This will help CVC, as well as landowners themselves to understand the groups and individuals that are doing work across the region. There are a number of programs or providers that can be used to implement this mapping project. For example, the Centre for Community Mapping (www.comap.ca) provides services in community mapping and has helped several organizations implement stewardship based mapping projects.

**Recommendation #9: Increase the distribution of visible property signs to identify landowners who have committed to taking action on their property and adapt with key messaging.** CVC’s existing signage program is an effective way to achieve social diffusion of landowner stewardship. The growing number of individuals taking action becomes visible in neighbourhoods, encouraging landowners to ‘join the club’ or inquire about what their neighbour has done to get a sign. People will begin to see that there is a movement afoot, and that taking action is something that everyone is doing. The signs also act as reminders or prompts to those who own the signs about their commitment to doing their part.

The current sign should be adapted to say “I Protect the Credit” or “I Protect the Credit”, which is associated with both personal action and stewardship of the Credit River Watershed as a whole. It suggests that the owner of the sign has taken action. In order to obtain a sign, landowners should have to conduct a fairly significant stewardship project. It is important that the sign is connected to participation in stewardship programs; however, a goal should also be to increase the visibility of these signs throughout the Watershed.

**Recommendation #10: Conduct projects with small groups or neighbourhoods as a way to build momentum and demonstrate to others what can be done.** With limited financial and human resources, CVC staff can only conduct so many activities and assist large scale projects. It will be useful to concentrate resources on certain projects, providing a high level of assistance to this group. Once a project is complete, it can be used as a demonstration site. This is similar in principle to what CVC is currently doing with its work at the sub watershed level. A completed project can also be used to show others what the results of a project would look like, clarifying uncertainties around project outcomes for those that are unsure. The project can be promoted in the media, as well as through friends and social networks, working to achieve social diffusion and increase general awareness of stewardship activities.
5.2.5 Personalised Communication
Achieving behaviour change is most effective when CBSM initiatives are delivered in a personalised way, tailoring the approach and specific information to each person. This can mean using the stories and experiences of other landowners to communicate messages in a meaningful way; or using direct face-to-face contact at the community level.

Recommendation #11: Send out monthly emails to landowners containing updates on CVC programs and projects, links to relevant information, promotions and special privileges. The email content could include a brief summary of topics of interest or current programs and would provide users links for finding the full information, articles (i.e. from the Source, CVC’s monthly newsletter), on CVC’s website, or external websites. It is recommended that the monthly emails use html format, meaning that the content, pictures and links would be embedded in the email. The update can then be emailed out to everyone on CVC’s growing contact list of landowners committed to protecting the Credit. Programs such as Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com) may be used to create and distribute this type of material.

This would be a separate initiative from CVC’s existing newsletter ‘The Source’. Whereas ‘The Source’ contains more general information about CVC, in-depth articles about the environment, Credit neighbour profiles, and opportunities to get involved; the email updates sent to landowners would not include full articles, and would be focused on landowner issues and programs.

Sending monthly updates is an excellent way of staying connected to landowners. A monthly newsletter will also act as a reminder of one’s commitment to ‘protecting the Credit’. It will send information to people, rather than relying on them to think of seeking it out.

The monthly emails, as well CVC’s ‘The Source’ should utilize personalised communication, for example by featuring stories about local landowners and their stewardship projects or ideas. This inspires other landowners to get involved and makes stewardship appear as the norm in the Credit River Watershed. Another benefit is that those who are featured in a local publication receive recognition and encouragement for their efforts, but they also make a public commitment to their peers, making them feel accountable to their actions. Similarly, these publications could show the growing number of landowners taking stewardship action.

Recommendation #12: Facilitate implementation of stewardship programs at the neighbourhood or issue level. This can be achieved by hosting local events
and seeking the assistance of neighbourhood residents for recruiting members and providing a location for the event or leading an event (e.g. workshop or garden party). It could also be achieved by asking the ‘Credit Countryside Stewards’ or those who have made a commitment to protecting the Credit, to volunteer as Ambassadors for their neighbourhood or issue (e.g. organizing a group rate for septic system pumping or tree pruning for reduced rates).

The research found that landowners like to be connected to others that have similar interests, or issues. Also, people often respond best to information received from people they interact with in their communities and whom they trust. When stewardship is encouraged at the local, community level, people have more of a personal commitment to follow through on their actions.

Recommendation #13: Maximize social media tools as a platform for communication and landowner engagement. Social media is by nature more personal, as it brings people together, and encourages people to share their pictures, stories and interests. Social media contributes to the social diffusion of messages through information sharing and extends reach to new audiences who may not come across CVC’s content otherwise. It facilitates the sharing of information, making it an excellent and low cost tool for social diffusion. Essentially, the tools are set up to allow for people in your networks to spread the message for you.

CVC’s existing Facebook page and Twitter account, as well other social media tools, provide an excellent platform for communication and conversation with landowners and assists CVC to develop more personal relationships with their constituency. In order to maximise social media in achieving its organizational objectives, CVC should implement social media best practices. It is recommended that CVC utilise best practices by developing and implementing a social media strategy to guide and maximise current and future social media efforts.

Strategic advice on improving CVC’s social media presence that should be addressed in a social media strategy include:

- **Define social media roles and responsibilities** – it is important to consider who will carry out the necessary roles and responsibilities. Developing a plan for internal communication is an easy first step when implementing a social media strategy.

- **Find your “digital natives”** – look for individuals within the organization who have the necessary skills, and are intimately familiar and comfortable using social media.
• **Build on existing fan/friend networks** – growing a network of followers is essential. Consider best practices for growing friends or fans for each social media tool.

**Tips on developing content:**

• **Remember to be genuine and authentic** – audiences find this much more impressive and engaging. Being genuine and authentic when using social media means showing personality, being transparent, getting to know your followers, and admitting when you’re wrong.

• **Use portable content** – links, widgets, online videos, buttons and badges facilitate the viral spread of messages to partners or others who want to share your messages. It is also valuable to provide content that can be replicated into other users’ news feeds.

• **Utilise cross promotion and piggy-backing** – each social media tool should support and promote the others, as well as drive people to the website.

It is important also to recognise the difference between corporate and project specific social media use. CVC’s existing Facebook page and Twitter site represent the CVC as a corporate entity. Here, social media is useful for promoting the CVC brand and reaching new audiences with general information about CVC programs. Certain CVC campaigns of programs, such as invasive species or native gardening, may be well suited for their own social media sites, such as Facebook pages, blogs, etc.

### 5.2.6 Prioritizing Stewardship Behaviours

**Recommendation #14:** CVC should help landowners to prioritize stewardship actions on their properties. When encouraging landowners to conduct stewardship actions, whether in workshops, or at events, CVC should offer landowners direction on the most important stewardship behaviours for their property. The current Caring for the Credit Workshop provides excellent and comprehensive advice to landowners about how to conduct stewardship action on their property; however, the long list of actions that landowners are encouraged to take may be acting as a barrier to action. Prioritizing the suggested stewardship actions as part of this workshop will help landowners to know where to start.

**Recommendation #15:** In the medium or long term, develop a workbook that can be filled out by landowners to receive personalized information about their property at a reasonable cost. Based on the strong interest of having
personalized information about one’s property and the desire to prioritize stewardship actions, it is suggested that CVC implement a program where landowners fill out a workbook about their property and receive personalized information about it. The existing ‘Your guide to Caring for the Credit’ workbook could provide the underlying content for this program. It could be adapted so that it can be easily filled out by landowners, particularly with assistance through the Caring for the Credit workshop. The content for the adapted workbook should be more personalised to one’s property.

For example, the workbook could include information on natural and cultural heritage, ecological data, and priority actions for one’s property. The program should be modelled on CVC’s previous conservation plan program, but adapted to reduce the cost and effort required. This workbook can be filled out by landowners on their own and then sent in to CVC to provide personalised advice. This makes it possible for landowners to do on their own time and without necessarily attending a workshop. It is also a program that is easily implemented at the neighbourhood level, meaning neighbourhood ambassadors can organise group workbook events as well as services that people in the neighbourhood can use together.

5.2.7 Incentives
Incentives are an effective tool for promoting desired behaviours. They can be used to motivate people to take a certain action. Incentives can be offered for doing the "right thing" such as providing tax breaks or prizes. The research found that incentives were among the strongest motivators for stewardship in general, as well as for specific stewardship activities, such as planting buffers and removing online ponds.

Recommendation #16: Wherever possible, offer financial incentives, such as reduced cost of materials or labour to encourage landowners to conduct stewardship behaviours. Given the clear importance of incentives to landowners in the Credit River Watershed and the proven significance of incentives and rewards in CBSM research, developing an incentive program must be a key component of CVC’s stewardship program. The most significant financial incentives should be available for higher intensity projects, such as removing online ponds and large-scale revegetation projects. These types of incentives would have to be determined on an individual basis taking into consideration the level of effort and the impact of not addressing the issue.
Offering free services is an excellent way to engage those landowners who are less involved and committed to stewardship. Such incentives are recommended for short term programs or offered as a reward, as they are not feasible to implement in the long term. Incentives can also come in the form of discounts or rebates, which can often be arranged with service providers for such things as septic system maintenance and inspection, or for purchase of native plants over non-natives at a low cost.

Also, CVC must ensure that landowners are aware of the provincial and federal funding opportunities available to them and their community. Eligible projects should be made clear to landowners and advertised. Providing examples of the types of projects that qualify for funding may inspire others to do similar projects, either on their own, or with others in their community.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS ON SPECIFIC STEWARDSHIP TOPICS

5.3.1 Septic System Management
The focus of the septic system stewardship programming should be on educating new homeowners on proper septic system maintenance and correcting any potential misperceptions among the general public.

Recommendation #17: Develop informational materials that utilize personal communication and reflect the identified barriers and benefits for septic system maintenance. The communication materials should include testimonials and advice from both experts and individuals landowners. Key messaging should reflect the need to perform preventative maintenance and to protect the health of the Credit River Watershed. For example, the materials could feature a local landowner who “learned the hard way” about what can happen when you don’t have your septic system checked regularly, and repaired, upgraded or replaced as needed.

A YouTube video is recommended as the preferred communication method. YouTube is the most popular video sharing site, with millions of videos being watched every day. Videos can be more engaging than text and therefore may help to reach new audiences with the information. Online videos also facilitate information sharing; research statistics have found that more than 50% of online video viewers share links with others. The video can be produced in house, with a small video camera or digital camera. It should be short, as attention spans rarely last beyond a minute and a half.
It is recommended informational materials for septic systems are distributed through rural realtors and organizations responsible for welcoming newcomers. This approach will help to address the knowledge gap present among new homeowners.

**Recommendation #18: Create a contest for landowners to win a coupon for septic system pumping by answering a related skill testing question.** The contest can be completed online and may use a simple survey provider such as Survey Monkey. Local service providers can be approached, requesting a group discount for septic system services, such as $50.00 or $100.00 off septic tank pumping. It is possible that, for bringing them more business, the service providers will offer the discount coupons at no cost to CVC.

In order to win a coupon, participants must answer skill testing questions based on information about septic system use and maintenance, which will be provided at the start of the survey. The questions could emphasize the importance of inspections and understanding how a system functions and that it has a limited life span. After answering correctly, the coupon can be sent to them electronically. The survey can also ask participants if a) they would like to receive continued updates and reminders to maintain their septic systems, and b) to make a commitment to maintain their septic system according to suggested methods outlined in the video and survey.

The contest will be an effective way to clarify and overcome any misperceptions about septic systems. It also rewards people for reading and understanding the material, which will help to ensure they learn and remember the information.

**Recommendation #19: Develop partnerships with rural realtors and organizations responsible for welcoming newcomers.** Realtors can be given informational materials about septic systems to distribute to new homeowners at the point of purchase. The welcome packages, which is distributed locally to all new homeowners in towns and villages in the Credit River Watershed is another key point of contact for reaching newcomers. The welcome package often includes information about civic issues, and would be a good place to reach people with information about their septic system.

**5.3.3 Creating Vegetative Buffers**
There are several behaviours and activities associated with creating buffers around aquatic features that can be encouraged using CBSM approaches. For example, there are some easy actions such as refraining from mowing or cropping near the
water feature and allowing natural growth to take over near the edge of the water feature. There are also more intensive stewardship activities such as planting native shrubs and trees or grasses along the water feature.

The target audience for these stewardship programs are landowners whose properties abut rivers, streams, marshes or wetlands. Also landowners whose property would provide benefit in terms of terrestrial habitat enhancement, connecting corridors or restoring natural areas. Special attention should be given to landowners with extensive lawns or lawn that extend to the waters-edge that could be re-vegetated.

Recommendation #20: Break down barriers by providing options to conduct simple and convenient behaviours first. CBSM research suggests that when individuals conduct simple behaviours first they are more likely to conduct more complex ones in the future. Since there are various behaviours that can be conducted with regards to buffers and revegetation ranging from low to high intensity, if landowners are hesitant, they should be encouraged to start with simple behaviours first (e.g. plant a native tree) and then move to more intensive revegetation projects (e.g. naturalizing around ponds, larger planting projects). Financial incentives and outreach programs should facilitate this by providing discounts, information and assistance for the simpler behaviours.

Recommendation #21: Provide workshops and assistance at the group level. Large scale revegetation projects are complex and require significant knowledge and expertise. The research demonstrated that landowners may feel daunted by such large tasks and by learning about multiple large tasks at once. Landowners also may not have the skills or expertise to conduct complex projects.

Providing a workshop for a group of landowners who have similar features, such as streams and ponds on their property and are interested in taking action would be an effective and resourceful way to work with a group of landowners with similar circumstances. These types of specific workshops can tailor learning experiences to the specific needs of a landowner that are practical and action-oriented, as well as bring landowners together to share resources. Bringing landowners with similar interests together can help facilitate the sharing of resources, such as bulk purchasing of materials or services, sharing costs of hiring professionals, etc.

Incentives to attend the workshop could include: an “I Protect the Credit” or “iProtect the Credit” property sign, and/or discounts on trees or shrubs. These incentives should be advertised upfront to get people’s attention.
Those who participate in the workshop should then be used as feature stories in communication materials, as well as other media, as a way to personalise communication. Members of the workshop should be encouraged to share information, tips, pictures and stories through social media networks, such as the CVC website or a separate blog. By providing mechanisms for feedback and personalising communication, this approach will build momentum and achieve social diffusion about the importance of creating buffers.

5.3.4 Mitigating or Removing Online Ponds
Although less than 10% of rural non-farm landowners in the Credit River Watershed likely have an online pond, their impact on the environment is significant. As a result the approach to this stewardship behaviour may be quite different than the other topic areas.

Recommendation #22: Develop a strong and clear incentive program for taking ponds offline. Consistent with the identified motivators, financial incentives, as well as physical assistance should be easily available for landowners. These incentives should be made clear to landowners when they are approached about their properties.

Recommendation #23: When approaching landowners regarding their online ponds, utilise a CBSM based approach to overcome barriers.
CBSM-based approaches include:

- Use a personalised approach to communication – talk about what others in the community have done or offer to pay the household a visit. Play on social norm appeals.
- Ask for progressive commitments – encourage hesitant landowners to start with smaller projects and work to obtain commitments for more intensive projects over time.
- Use images and/or demonstration sites to ensure landowners understand their options.
- Stress the benefits – ensure that landowners are clear about the affect their pond is having on the Credit River Watershed and the fish and wildlife.
- Develop a ‘Barrier and Response Matrix’ – predetermine responses to common barriers to remove knowledge barriers/myths around them.

Example of a Barriers and Response Matrix:
### Table 1 - Barriers and Benefits Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did not know ponds have a negative impact</td>
<td>• Online ponds can change the natural flow characteristics and channel stability of the stream, negatively affecting fish populations. Trout are the most sensitive species and your pond could be having an effect on the local trout population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the appearance of my pond</td>
<td>• Your pond may be causing fish species that are introduced (if you stock your pond) to compete with native species. • I can show you images of what a retrofitted pond looks like. • Others in your area are doing it. • Doing things like creating a buffer around it will improve wildlife habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use my pond for recreation</td>
<td>• There are options that will allow you to maintain the recreational features of your pond, such as...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have time to make changes</td>
<td>• Projects A, B, and C only take x amount of time. • CVC will conduct xx% of the work for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is too expensive to make the changes</td>
<td>• There may be funding available for naturalizing your stream and removing dams (or retrofitting them to allow fish to pass through). Up to xx% of the funding would be available. In total the project will cost you about $xx.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know what to do</td>
<td>• A specialist from the CVC will provide you with one-on-one personal assistance with your online pond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There will be more maintenance involved</td>
<td>• Not taking your pond offline can actually make it more difficult to manage because natural accumulation of sediments and nutrients gradually change the pond into a wetland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No need – my pond does not impact wildlife or the environment</td>
<td>• It may not be obvious to you, as it can be hard to distinguish between online and offline ponds. We would be happy to come by and confirm. There will be no obligation to follow our recommendations, but at least this way you will know.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendation #24: For those that do not agree to remove their online pond, provide other less intensive and expensive options to mitigate online pond impacts.** Understanding that there are strong barriers and a high level of resistance towards removing one’s pond, rather than conceding completely, landowners should be given other options that also help to mitigate environmental effects. For example:

- Naturalizing the pond by adding native plants and habitat structures for wildlife
• Installing special structures (i.e. for fish passage, to allow water with cooler temperatures to flow through)
• Creating a by-pass channel
• Partially removing the dam structure.

5.3.5 Planting Native Species
The objective of this area of rural stewardship programming should be to encourage landowners to use locally appropriate native species on their property and work towards restoring and creating more natural habitats. The key audiences are a) landscapers and ecological restoration experts – as opinion leaders with the potential of influencing others, b) the landowner – who makes purchases and decisions about planting on their property, and c) nurseries who provide the products and are present at the point of purchase.

Recommendation #25: Use posters, plant tags, and signs in retail stores to remind landowners that by purchasing and planting particular plants they can make a significant effort towards protecting the environment. These materials can be designed, produced and distributed for modest cost. By partnering with garden centres that will agree to post and use them, the effort of posting prompts can be distributed to the store managers. As well, the garden centres will benefit since they will likely be able to attract more customers as they become known in the community for carrying native and local species. Part of the agreement with nurseries could be to list their name on the CVC website as a supplier of native plants.

Recommendation #26: Host native gardening/lawn maintenance workshops at local nurseries and through partnerships with key industry organizations. The workshops should offer information on: how to identify native plants, the benefits of native plants, how and where to grow native plants as well as discuss how to attract wildlife to the garden and other key benefits. Other workshops could focus more on tips for reducing or eliminating lawns, or creating special natural habitats, such as meadows, thickets, and woodlands. As an incentive to attend the workshop, participants can be offered a discount on native plants at the nursery.

Offering workshops is a way to provide one-on-one advice and personalised interaction with landowners at a reasonable cost. It will also boost sales at nurseries, and helps to create working relationships with nursery owners and sales representatives. As nursery staff themselves become more knowledgeable about native planting and gardening, they will help to raise awareness about native
species in the community. Ideally, they will eventually provide the personalised advice and one-on-one interaction that landowners value. Commitments to plant natives can be obtained at these types of workshops.

**Recommendation #27: Create a blog to present information and tips on planting and maintaining a native garden and/or property.** The blog should provide information and tips on how to create native gardens or lawns as well as sales, events, and where to find other resources. The blog should employ a personal approach to communication and the blogger should make an effort to connect with readers as well as connect and share information with other garden bloggers.

The blog is an excellent way to help promote the perceived benefits of planting native species, by using pictures, demonstration sites, and stories of other landowners who have created beautiful habitats that attract wildlife. The blog will also be a way to connect landowners around a common interest.

### 5.3.6 Invasive Plants Management

In order to best encourage rural, non-farm property owners within the Credit River Watershed to undertake stewardship projects associated with invasive species, CVC’s landowner stewardship program must raise awareness and knowledge about invasive plants and improve the landowners’ ability to identify problematic species. CVC’s Invasive species program currently provides excellent tools and resources for identifying, monitoring, and removing invasive species. The following recommendations are intended to build momentum and increase awareness of the invasive species program and its existing tools and resources.

**Recommendation #28: Develop an invasive species identification campaign blitz: “Spot That Invasive” or “Wanted: x invasive”.** The campaign could focus on one species at a time and then incorporate other key problematic species. Communication materials may include information about how to identify a particular plant and what to do with them once they are spotted. Landowners would be encouraged to locate the species on their property and report back to CVC, using an online survey or online mapping tool (see below). As a reward for reporting on invasive species, landowners could be entered into a draw to win a prize. The program would be promoted through various communication networks, especially the newsletter and social media. CVC could then report back to landowners on their progress of invasive species management and gain momentum over time.
This type of campaign would work to overcome the knowledge barriers regarding invasive plants identification and uses the perceived benefits for key messaging. It uses humour and vivid communications techniques to attract people’s attention and help them remember the message (e.g. an invasive species with a “Where’s Waldo” hat on it). It also helps landowners to focus their effort on one species at a time, addressing the tendency among landowners to feel overwhelmed.

**Recommendation #29: In the medium-term, CVC should integrate the OFAH Invading Species Mapping Project into their landowner programming.** The Invasives Tracking System (ITS) ([www.comap.ca/its](http://www.comap.ca/its)) is a web based reporting and tracking system designed to be a one-stop-shop for invasive species information in Ontario. The ITS allows users to view invasive species distributions, report invasive species sightings, browse an online field guide of invasives, along with many other features. It uses an easy to use interface with robust query tools and allows users to save and print a customized distribution map. The ITS is currently available; however it is still being developed and improved.

The ITS offers a way for landowners to receive feedback about what is happening in their community and how their actions fit into the overall issue. Also, by seeing that so many others have reported and taken action to stop the spread of invasive species, people will be encouraged to take part. Another benefit of this recommended strategy is that the costs of this program will be shared with other stakeholders. This mapping project can use the same interface as the stewardship mapping project. Invasive species tracking would be its own layer on the stewardship map.

### 5.4 FURTHER RESEARCH AND NEXT STEPS

**Recommendation #30: CBSM Training.** In order to ensure that CVC is maximizing all opportunities to engage landowners, staff should have an understanding of CBSM approaches and general landowner contact protocol (e.g. how to approach people, seeking small commitments first, etc.). Landowner protocol should be developed, along with a training manual that can be picked up by new staff and volunteers. The manual should include commitment forms and scripts for securing commitment, as well as information on how to record commitments. Another component of the manual should be a list of common barriers to action and responses that address these barriers.

**Recommendation #31: Social Media Training.** It is important that CVC staff members are aware of best practices for using social media in an organizational setting as well as
the specific best practices for each tool. Social media training can help staff members to become aware of these best practices, and understand how to best utilise social media to achieve CVC’s objectives. Social media training also helps to establish a baseline of behavioural conduct for social media within the organization.

**Recommendation #32: CBSM Pilot Project.** The fourth step in the CBSM process is to pilot test CBSM strategies. The idea is to test strategies with a smaller segment of the community to allow for fine-tuning of a program and to ensure that resources are being well spent. Several variations of a strategy or a combination of tools can be tested as part of a pilot strategy. It is recommended that CVC choose particular divisible behaviours and variations of a recommended strategy for pilot testing.

### 5.5 PRIORITIZING RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented above suggest enhancement of existing programs or establishment of new programs, all utilizing CBSM principles. The overall program recommendations are most effective when implemented in unison. Selectively choosing the broader recommendations should be avoided. There is, however, more flexibility in selecting recommendations on specific behaviours.

Adjustments to existing programs are a logical starting point to implementing the recommendations. Implementation of the commitment strategy and building commitments and key messaging into existing programs should be first steps. CVC should also examine integrating personalized communication methods into existing programs as outlined above.

Longer term goals should focus on developing social norms around stewardship behaviours, including recommendations regarding signage and community mapping initiatives. Although social norm development is extremely important in behaviour change, it takes time to develop and build on the efforts of other initiatives.

Recommendations on specific behaviours can be more selective in implementation and should be prioritized for implementation based on the impact of the behaviour and the likelihood that landowners will undertake the behaviour. The recommendations on specific behaviours build on the broader program recommendations and offer excellent opportunities for pilot testing and fine-tuning the strategies to target the specific behaviours as efficiently as possible.
6.0 CONCLUSION

This research study identified several key barriers to stewardship action, such as knowledge of the existing programs and activities available, lack of interest, and a lack of time or money to participate. Many landowners also find that stewardship on large properties is overwhelming and have trouble knowing where to start. The research also determined that despite this fairly low level of participation, landowners value the natural environmental, the surrounding wildlife and the general lifestyle of living in a rural community. Many landowners are concerned about environmental issues and want to ensure that Credit River Watershed is protected over the long-term. A primary goal is therefore to close this gap between environmental knowledge and values and taking action to protect it. The report recommends a number of key strategies for adapting and improving the existing landowner outreach program to achieve this objective, such as seeking commitments, creating a social norm around stewardship and using personal communication tactics. With implementation of these strategies, CVC will see a significant increase in landowner stewardship action and as a result, a healthier Watershed and a more educated, engaged and resilient community.
REFERENCES


Appendix A
CBSM Fundamentals
COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL MARKETING OVERVIEW

Community-Based Social Marketing is an approach based on research in the social sciences that is effective in changing behaviours and maintaining sustainable behaviours over the long term. CBSM initiatives focus on removing barriers to an activity and promoting the most influential benefits or motivators to the desired behaviour change. CBSM tools are then employed to reinforce and sustain the behaviours, usually with direct contact at the community level. A common understanding of CBSM principles, processes and tools is valuable for this research study.

1.0 FUNDAMENTALS OF CBSM

Conventional information and educational campaigns are successful at building awareness and understanding of environmental issues. Techniques that rely heavily or exclusively on communication campaigns such as media advertising however have proven to be limited in their ability to foster behavioural change. Fundamental elements that differentiate a CBSM campaign from traditional communication campaigns include:

- **Identify and Remove Barriers**
  CBSM campaigns strive to remove barriers and promote the perceived benefits to adoption of behaviours to make the adoption more likely. Barriers prevent people from engaging in a certain behaviour and are specific to each activity. Barriers may be:
  - Internal to an individual, such as lack of knowledge, non-supportive attitudes, absence of motivation; or
  - External to the individual, such as changes that need to be made in order for the behaviour to be more convenient (e.g. providing accessible expertise or education) or affordable (e.g. subsidizing septic maintenance activities).

It is difficult to design an effective CBSM program without first knowing what inhibits the public from engaging in the desired activity. To identify these barriers, CBSM practitioners employ a range of research methods including:
1) Focus groups and interviews to explore in-depth attitudes and understanding of people regarding the behaviour(s) under consideration;
2) Surveys conducted with a random sample of respondents;
3) Review of relevant articles, reports and existing programs in order to gain a clear understanding of what behaviour(s) are to be examined, and to learn from the experience of others;

- **Simple and Convenient Behaviours First**
  Behaviour change is most effective when starting with the “low-hanging fruit” – behaviours that are easy to do and have the least number of perceived barriers. For very difficult activities, it is often hard for people to make the leap from what they are doing now to what is desired of them, because they often surround the second
activity with a large number of perceived barriers or reasons why not to do it. However, by adopting simple behaviours first, those with the fewest barriers attached to them, more people are likely to become engaged in the behaviour. Once people have started engaging in one behaviour, they will start seeing themselves as someone who supports the overall program and will be more likely to carry out the other activities desired of them.

- **Direct and Personal Contact from Trusted Sources**
  Achieving behaviour change is most effective when CBSM initiatives are delivered in a personalized way, tailoring the approach and specific information to the particular audience. It is most effective to use direct face-to-face contact at the community level. Social research has determined that people are more willing to engage in behaviours in response to direct appeals to change, and when there is evidence of social support for that change. People also often respond best to information received from people they interact with in their communities and whom they trust. In CBSM strategies this means that promoting desired behaviours, illustrating why they are important and removing barriers works best in face-to-face encounters. This can include interactions with staff when purchasing a product at a store, sharing stories at community events, or interacting with advocates and instructors at workshops. The communications used in these direct contacts must be personalized to individual groups, as people are more likely to remember information that evokes images personal to them.

- **Developing Community Norms**
  People often mirror their attitudes and behaviour by observing those around them (family, co-workers, neighbours). By creating new societal norms that have full community support, desired behaviour changes can reach a wider audience. Societal norms are very strong, can vary from culture to culture, and people find them difficult to break. Established norms can be broken down and replaced with new ones however. For example, the norm of smoking in other people’s homes, in public places, and even on public transportation has been replaced by a new norm of not doing such things. People now wear seat belts where they once did not. Many people bring their own mugs to meetings rather than use disposable coffee cups. There is less drinking and driving now than there was 20 years ago. Fewer people now wear scented products in work places. These are all examples of substantial changes in social norms over the last several years. Norm appeals, therefore, are a way of making group standards more apparent.

### 2.0 CBSM TOOLS

A number of “tools” have been demonstrated in the psychology literature to be effective at promoting behaviour change. These tools are often most effective when used in combination and include:

- **Commitment**: Research has found that once people make a commitment, such as a pledge or agreement, to one activity, they are not only more likely to follow through with it, but also more likely to agree to more demanding commitments in
the future. Common forms of commitment can take written or verbal forms. Research indicates that the probability that someone will carry out an activity increases with a written commitment, and becomes even more likely with a public commitment.

- **Prompts**: Prompts are a visual or auditory aid that reminds people to engage in a desired behaviour. The purpose of a prompt is to remind individuals to perform a particular action and often works well to support commitments people make. The prompts may be in the form of a sticker, memo card, or tag in appropriate locations that provide a visual reminder to engage in certain behaviour. Prompts work best if they are located as close to where a behaviour takes place as possible.

- **Incentives, Disincentives, Awards and Recognition**: These types of tools are effective at both promoting desired behaviours and discouraging undesired behaviours. They can be used to motivate people to take a certain action or to add more barriers to an undesired action. Incentives and disincentives are particularly useful when motivation to engage in action is low or people are not doing the activity as effectively as they could. Incentives can be offered for doing the "right thing" such as providing tax breaks or contest prizes. Conversely, disincentives can be implemented, such as fines, for doing the "wrong thing." Incentives for doing the wrong thing can also be removed, such as limiting the number of parking spaces.

- **Feedback**: People are more likely to stick with a behaviour change for a longer period of time (and potentially motivate others to change) if they see that they are making a difference in their community, their health or the environment. Feedback can be in the form of advertising, promotional literature, special events, presentations, or other such activities.

### 3.0 CBSM PROCESS

CBSM strategy development and implementation involved five key steps:

**STEP 1 – Selecting Desired Behaviour(s)**
Developing an effective behaviour change program begins with selecting the right behaviour(s) and right audience to target.

**STEP 2 – Identifying Barriers and Benefits**
The identification of barriers and perceived benefits within each community through research is crucial to effectively promoting sustainable behaviour. Once the reasons for everyday behaviour(s) are understood, strategies are developed to minimize the barriers and maximize the perceived benefits of each selected behaviour.

**STEP 3 – Selecting Behavioural Change Tools**
Once the barriers and benefits of the specific community are identified, tools to change behaviour are selected. Strategies often involve a combination of tools including social norms, vivid communications, commitment, reward and recognition, and social diffusion.

**STEP 4 – Pilot Program Design**
Pilot programs test the strategy design with a smaller segment of the community. This allows fine-tuning of the behavioural change strategy to ensure it will be highly effective.

**STEP 5 – Large-Scale Application**
Once the pilot has proven successful, the strategy can be implemented on a community-wide scale.
Appendix B
Focus Group Summary
A. ATTENDEES

Facilitator: Jeff Garkowski (Lura Consulting)
Note Taker: Ariana Cancelli (Lura Consulting)
# of Focus Group Participants: 9

B. OBJECTIVE

- To review findings, share and test out ideas for programs and strategies, and test out program names and messaging.

C. DISCUSSION AREAS

- Communication
- Overall Program Strategies
- Slogan/Branding
- Individual Program Strategies

D. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Personal and one-on-one assistance is very valuable; taking care of a large property is challenging.
- Helping landowners prioritize their stewardship activities would help them to take action; too many options is overwhelming.
- Participants would like to be connected to others that have the same issues as they do; they can help each other and learn from one another.
- Landowners like to see what can be done; use pictures, demonstrations and stories of other landowners.
- There are opportunities to provide services and conduct activities at the neighbourhood level, however there needs to be follow-up, incentives and other mechanisms to ensure there is follow through.
- When activities are organized by individuals rather than CVC, there is more of a commitment to follow through on their commitments.
- Incentives are a good motivator. Financial incentives are effective and help to get your attention. Other perks, such as coupons, and recognition are also effective.
• Conducting projects with smaller groups can be used to demonstrate to others what can be done.
• The CVC needs to build its database of contacts and drive people to their website.
• Self-interest is a key motivation for landowners. They are motivated when the action or activity benefits them.
• Participants would be interested in a ‘landowner club’, especially if it was based on a moral commitment, rather than specific time or event commitments.
• *Invasive species:* participants would want to know what they should do about invasive species, not just how to identify them. A continuous program, with a new species every month would be effective.
• *Septic systems:* resources should be put towards education. A coupon would be a good motivator. Participants would watch a You Tube video for information on their septic systems. Information should come from an expert and fellow landowners.

E. **FOCUS GROUP NOTES**

**Personal/One-on-one Assistance**

• This would be very helpful
• It is very hard to take care of a big property; landowners don’t always know what to do.
• Landowners appreciate when the information they receive if specific to their property.
• There needs to be a way to raise awareness of the programs. People need to be told they can have a one-on-one visit.
• Although CVC couldn’t work with or visit everyone, they could start with a small group of people and use them to build momentum and show others what can be done.
• Maybe people can do this as a neighbourhood. So the CVC staff or expert can visit more than one person at a time.
• One-on-one assistance gives you a responsibility to act.

**Landowner Contact Manual**

• There are people who feel threatened by CVC. These people are territorial about their properties.
• The CVC has a regulatory role – that is where these skills would be important.
• It would be good if there was one representative that dealt with all the people in one area.

**Personalised Information (i.e. featuring other landowners or success stories)**

• “I like to see what others have done – this would be great.”
• Showing people what projects will look like in the future is helpful too.
• CVC needs to explain to people that things take a long time.
• CVC could features local stories and landowner successes in other local publications (i.e. the Hills, Sideroads). They could produce an ongoing series of articles would be very effective.
Incentives

- Money is a good way to get your attention.
- It is not huge factors but it is effective for getting people’s attention.
- The heritage farm signs/Credit Valley lawn signs are a good approach - It gets at the critical mass.
- “When I saw that my neighbour had a lawn sign, I thought how do I get a sign? And I wondered what they had done to get a sign”
- It is a good reminder.

Social Pressure

- Adults are not driven by social pressure.
- Something like a thermometer would not be effective.
- “One person in my neighbourhood brought in a tree consultant and invited other neighbours to take part. There was no cost. Everyone took advantage of this. This was effective because:
  - I had a commitment to my neighbour.
  - They had a commitment to me.
  - It was a specific issue that we all had. We had a compelling reason to participate.”
- It’s more about leading by example.
- Start with a small group of people and then others will join.

Neighbourhood Led Workshops

- Follow-up after the workshops is important.
- There should be targets and measurements that people have to meet.
- Asking individuals to coordinate some of CVC’s activities and off loading them on individuals and groups is an effective approach.
- Did you serve beer and wine?
- “I think I would be more likely to participate in someone I knew called me and we did the workshop ourselves”
- “We did an event like this – we got Lorraine Johnston to come and speak. We advertised in the local paper and sent out emails. We got a lot of people to come out”.
- People can help each other with projects. If you are by yourself, it is hard to do.

Commitments

- “Are you asking for people’s time? Or is more a moral commitment?”
- CVC needs to be careful not to appear that they are asking for too much.
- The goals should bring people together around a moral sense of connection and belonging.
- It is about building a community of people.
- It is what you are committed to yourself.
Invasive Species

- (On the awareness campaign - Spot that invasive)
- The campaign needs to provide a solution if people have/find them on their property – Once you have them, then what?
- The prize could be someone to come to your property to help you with the invasive species.
- The program should address more than one species. One is too specific.
- There could have a competition based on how many you have.
- The species that is the focus of the campaign should be one that is in season/bloom.
- Showing progress.
- You want to identify and tackle at the same time.

Septic Systems

- The message should come from a combination of expert and neighbours
- There is no real expertise required to maintain a septic system – its just how you use it what you put in
- A coupon – forcing people to go through the process – if it is worth it, people will do it.
- Put resources towards – knowledge

Other Discussion Points

- Properties are overwhelming to the individual owner. It would be effective to provide information to help landowners know what to focus on. This would help you know where to start. I would be more likely to follow through.
- There is a lot to learn and a lot to do. Having a person tell you where to start would be helpful.
- Too many options are overwhelming.
- The flora and fauna inventory is a good place to start.
- A place on our website. You could match yourself up with other people who have the same concerns.
- People can help each other with projects. If you are by yourself, it is hard to do.
- CVC should start with a small group sessions. Then message will spread, through neighbours talking.
- There could be a community exchange. – People helping each other.

Getting people to Take Action

- It is the self interest thing. it needs to be issues that people are interested int.
- People need to have a self interest in something to take action.
- There are workshops that the CVC provides to help landowners. These are always full.
- The property book is another great option for taking a personal approach. People loved this book. It has personalised aerial photographs and history about your property. There could be different options/levels of having this done with different price ranges.
• People want expertise. Not necessarily summer students.
• Youth Engagement - The kids would be promoting CVC – they go home and talk to their parents.

**Information Sources**

• A good way to raise awareness is by putting information in the tax bill. This is where you get information about tree planting. People pay attention to this.
• They should design their website so that search engines pick it up.
• Send information through the tax bill. Find out who moves in and send them information.
• I need to be led to the website.
• The CVC needs to build a database.

**E. MESSAGING/BRANDING DISCUSSION**

*Discussion about values – what do the following words mean to you?*

**Aesthetic**

• Alive and natural
• Natural beauty, as natural as possible.
• Native plants. You can have a combination.
• Healthy.

**Wildlife**

• Balanced wildlife
• Viewing opportunities; seeing animals on my property
• Diversity of wildlife

**Countryside living**

• It is beautiful
• Wildlife
• You live side by side with nature.

**Other thoughts**

• A combination of all of all of these things is why we live here
• Nature is what brings you here.
• It is about a lifestyle –
• This means different things to different people.
• Nature preservation and wildlife are good for graphics.
Word association – What are some other words that you think of when you hear the following words.

_Countryside_
- (it is a good word; it encompasses all of the other words)
- rural – but it is hard to say
- pastoral
- no sidewalks
- peaceful and serene
- vistas – and long views.

_Steward_
- very good word
- it evokes responsibility – taking care
- helpful
- I like to think of myself that way
- It has an old English connotation
- Or Caretaker
- Or Conservator
- Stewardship is different than ownership
- I can do what I can but my neighbour has to do it too.
- it is a good word because it means I have to do my part but so does my neighbour
- Even if people don’t know the exact meaning, most people think of it as a good thing.
- Responsibility
- Or Guardian - Guardian isn’t bad. It is more understandable. But is more about ownership.

_Credit_
- Credit watershed is a good word.
- People are concerned about what goes into the river.
- Or Headwaters. People relate to this. It is where we are. It makes the connection to water.
- People are connected to water.
- Or the forks of the credit.

_Club_
- Some people may not want to join a club
- Need to explain this is what is going to be offered.
- A club sounds like too close of a group.
- Or community
- Or association – although it is slightly formal.
Countryside

- It excludes people that live in the town.

What do you think of the phrase – “Caring for the Credit” vs. “I Protect the Credit.”

- **Caring for the credit**
  - It is less personal
  - It’s ok.

- **I Protect the Credit.**
  - I makes me think “If I don’t have a sign I am not doing it”
  - Protecting – means you are doing something.
  - It is more personal
  - It makes you think of the things you have done to protect the credit.
  - You could have a growing list of a people who ‘protect the credit’
  - You would need to have a lost of things that people can do to ‘protect the credit’
  - from less intensive to more complex tasks
  - But will someone checks? How do you get a sign?
  - If other people ask – you have to be able to say/show what you have done.
Appendix C
Example Written Commitment Sheet
The Credit Countryside Stewards is a group of residents that are committed to protecting our countryside - the Credit River Watershed - through practicing good stewardship on our properties. Making smart decisions about water, building, landscaping, and energy conservation contributes to healthy ecosystems and saves money. Together, small actions by individuals on their own properties add up to a big results for the protection of our countryside.

As part of the Credit Countryside Stewards we are also keeping a list of residents that are doing their part to be good stewards that will be published on our website or in newsletters to let other residents know how many people are helping to protect the Credit countryside. Your name will not be published without your consent.

We, the undersigned, pledge to take actions on our properties, such as planting native species [OR ANY BEHAVIOUR SUITED TO THE SITUATION], to be good stewards of our countryside. In doing so we recognize that we are doing our part to protect and enhance what we love about our countryside.

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