

Comment	Response
<p>The bias against Manitoba Maple in this document is extreme. It's not a favoured tree by many people, but that's no reason to overstate that it is nonnative (just PEC), but fail to treat Black Walnut and perhaps other species in the same light. Manitoba Maple, Black Walnut, et al. are equally invasive to PEC and originate in southwestern Ontario.</p>	<p>We appreciate the comment. It was not our intent to show an extreme bias against Manitoba Maple.</p>
<p>RE: The temporary channel that enters the development through 2 culverts under the Millenium Trail. Ephemeral watercourses or intermittent streams are water bodies in a legal sense. We would argue that this is a "temporary channel" and not a legal water body or watercourse. We suggest you use the term "temporary channel" to be consistent with the O. Reg. Please explain to reader why this temporary channel is not a water body. Moreover, the mapping suggests that this temporary channel extends from the Millenium Trail to the wetland, but this is not consistent with the air/sat time series photos in Google Earth. The maps in the document suggest that the temporary channel is a water body or watercourse. We suggest 2 changes to the maps: 1) reduce the length of the channel (perhaps to the hedgerow immediately west as shown in air photos), and 2) use a dashed line – rather than solid – to show the location of the channel on maps.</p>	<p>We appreciate the comment, and the attempt to clarify the nature of what we have described as a drainage feature in our report. including that this is not a watercourse in the legal sense. We agree with your conclusion in that regard. The inclusion of this drainage feature on mapping in the EIS is simply based on the recognition that it is shown in provincial mapping, where small drainages are often inferred (i.e.; shown where they would be expected to be, although not actually present); that is the case here. While there is clearly conveyance of flows from a culvert outlet at the north end of this property, across the current agricultural fields and to the wetland, there is no evidence of any channelization of such flows except immediately below the culvert entering the property (as a consequence of occasional erosional velocities at the culvert outlet). Section 2.3 of our report includes a very detailed description of this drainage feature, with the terminology we have used to describe it in that section remaining appropriate, in our opinion. It is noted that Quinte Conservation have reviewed the EIS and have agreed with our comments on this mapped drainage feature. They have further noted that this drainage feature does not meet the definition of a watercourse under O.Reg. 41/24 and hence is not regulated by their office.</p>
<p>Blanding's Turtle – Appendix C SAR Assessment. The distribution of Blanding's Turtle overlaps with the proposed development. Moreover, Blanding's Turtles have been observed crossing Sandy Hook Road at the edge of the site. The habitat for Blanding's Turtle – as described in Appendix C – exists on site. However, "POTENTIAL HABITAT PRESENT" is stated as N(o) with a reason for stating "Lack of suitable wetland habitat on the subject property". This reasoning is inconsistent with the description of Blanding's Turtle habitat in the same table. It appears that the presence of Blanding's Turtles was erroneously dismissed. It ignores local knowledge, including the WATCH FOR TURTLE sign along Sandy Hook Road. This sign is based on the observation of Blanding's Turtles crossing the road. Clearly more analysis for Blanding's Turtle needs to be completed here, including canvassing the Prince Edward County Field Naturalists and other local, federal, and provincial experts. The EIS states "Blanding's turtles nest in dry coniferous and mixed forest habitats, as well as fields and roadsides (Government of Canada, 2015)". This type of habitat surrounds the wetland and based on expert opinion might be included in the protected area along with the wetland along with an appropriate buffer. Alternatively, a larger setback from the wetland, in the order of 100 m might be required – based on Blanding's Turtle expert opinion. In addition, we would like to see Blanding's Turtle expert opinion on the appropriateness of the trails and stormwater LID beside the wetland.</p>	<p>We acknowledge that Blanding's Turtle are known to the general area, which is why that species was included in our Species at Risk assessment, as provided in Appendix C of the EIS. We are also aware of the turtle crossing sign on Sandy Hook Road, although do not have specific knowledge that this was based on a confirmed sighting of a Blanding's Turtle (we did note the presence of tracks created by a Snapping Turtle on the subject lands, so do know this species is present in this area). We also recognize that there are fairly extensive areas of wetland along the Waring's Creek floodplain to the south of Sandy Hook Road, and that there are portions of those wetlands which could potentially support Blanding's Turtle, so it is certainly possible that a Blanding's Turtle may have been identified along that road. It is noted that our site inspections and Species at Risk Assessment included work by very qualified Species at Risk specialists, and that we often deal with Blanding's Turtle in our studies. Our table and the text of our report could have better explained why it was the opinion of our Species at Risk biologists that the wetland within the subject property lacks suitable habitat for this species. In this regard, this wetland does not contain any areas of open water that we deemed to have potential to be used as either a seasonal stopover area or as overwintering habitat for this species. In light of the additional information you have provided we have reconsidered our conclusions on this matter and continue to feel they are appropriate. While Blanding's Turtle can move considerable distances over a season, and will use a variety of habitats, including woodlands, as they do so, there is no reason why they would move into or through the subject lands, as habitat opportunities for this species are very limited on these lands, and as there are no areas of appropriate habitat that they would be moving towards as they cross these lands. That said, it is certainly not impossible that a Blanding's Turtle occurring in the area could decide to move across this property, and could make some use of habitat that is not well suited for it.. Should that occur, it is important to keep in mind that the wetland on this property, together with a substantial buffer that includes most of the existing woodland on this property, are to be preserved over the long term, thereby ensuring such habitats remain available to this and other turtle species. We additionally recommend that prior to any development activity occurring on lands adjacent to the wetland, including the installation of the infiltration basin (which will be restored to a vegetated state following installation), other stormwater infrastructure and rear yards, a four foot high sediment fence, backed by page wire, first be installed; this fence will act as an exclusion barrier for turtles during construction. We also recommend that Species at Risk training be provided to construction personnel, a measure that we have found very helpful in preventing against inadvertent harm to both Species at Risk and their habitats during other projects we have been involved in. These are details that can be addressed as Draft Plan conditions.</p>
<p>During a meeting with members of the Warnings Creek Improvement Association on August 28, 2024, and in a subsequent email from Mr. Bowiby of August 30, 2024, a concern was raised about turtles, potentially including Blanding's Turtle, crossing Sandy Hook Road. Given that turtles have been seen on this road, and that the subject development and other local proposed development will increase vehicle traffic along this road, there is a concern of increased road mortality of turtles. Exclusion fencing was briefly discussed during the meeting, with the question of future opportunities to use such fencing, and to otherwise manage against turtle mortality, having been raised in the subsequent correspondence.</p>	<p>Habitat opportunities for turtles are concentrated to the wetlands and other floodplain habitats associated with the Warnings Creek stream corridor south of Sandy Hook Road. That said, turtles will seek out opportunities for nesting along the shoulders of roads (exposing the turtles to danger, and generally resulting in poor egg/hatchling survival because of easy predation by species like fox and racoon). Further, despite there not being good turtle habitat opportunities north of the road, turtles may nevertheless still cross the road in search of habitat. These risks can be mitigated with the installation of an exclusion fence along the south side of Sandy Hook Road in proximity of Warnings Creek; on other projects where such exclusion fencing is specific to turtles, Species at Risk biologists from the Province have agreed with us that a four foot high chain link fence, with the bottom of the fencing trenched in a minimum 6 inches, is effective for this purpose. Recognizing that any such exclusion fencing would be on a municipal road allowance, this would require County participation. It is recommended that any such fence extend a minimum 20 metres, but preferably 30 m, beyond the limits of the floodplain (with gaps as necessary for existing driveway accesses). Further, it is recommended that at the east and wet limits of that fence, as well as at any driveway openings, that such fencing extend back to the edge of the road allowance at a minimum (or, with landowner permission, a minimum 20 m back from the road). A fence of this design will discourage turtles from getting on the road. A further measure that could be undertaken in combination with this would be to create shallow berms of coarse sand and pea gravel within the fenced limits, encouraging turtles to use those features for nesting (as opposed to the road shoulder); in other projects we have been involved in, such nesting berms are typically about 2 m wide, 5 m to 8 m long and 0.5 m deep.</p>