JLR No.: 32563
Revision: 00

November 4, 2025

Prepared for:

DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY PLANNING BOARD
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DRAFT

Draft Policy Direction Report

Draft Official Plan for the Desbarats to Echo Bay Planning Area

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1.0 Introduction

An Official Plan is a comprehensive policy document that guides growth and development within a community. There are three official plans in effect for the Planning Area; Township of MacDonald Meredith and Aberdeen Additional Official Plan, Township of Johnson Official Plan and the Township of Tarbutt Official Plan. The Planning Act requires municipalities to review their official plans ten (10) years after an official plan first comes into effect, then every five years thereafter. To ensure consistency across the entire Desbarats to Echo Bay Planning Board, one consolidated Official Plan which applies to all four municipalities is being prepared. J.L. Richards (JLR) has been retained to conduct a scoped review of the existing draft Official Plan, identify required updates to address changes to Provincial legislation and Provincial planning policy documents and prepare a final Official Plan for approval.

The purpose of this report is to review the existing Draft Official Plan, identify issues, and set out policy recommendations for the Planning Board's consideration.

The following is a summary of the themes explored through our review, issues identified and where they have been addressed in the document:

- Section 2.0 speaks to changes to the Planning Act and includes recommendations to update the draft Official Plan to implement required changes in relation to site plan control, parkland dedication and complete application requirements.
- Section 3.0speaks to the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario and includes recommendations to promote a range of land uses, prioritize the creation of complete communities and prioritize collaboration with Indigenous communities.
- Section 4.1 speaks to growth and settlement and includes recommendations to update population and employment forecasts to the year 2049, introduce settlement area boundary expansion policies, and strengthen policies in relation to infilling, lot creation and intensification.
- Section 4.2 speaks to housing and includes some additional policy recommendations to address affordable housing and residential land supply.
- Section 4.3 speaks to the rural and agricultural areas, the findings of the Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) and provides policy recommendations in relation to the protection of agricultural resources.
- Section 4.4 speaks to natural features and areas and includes a minor policy recommendation around the requirement for environmental impact statements for significant wildlife habitat.
- Section 4.5 speaks to employment and economic development and includes policy directions to strengthen the economic base and recognize the prominence of the agricultural and service industry.
- Section 4.6 speaks to recreation, parks and open space and concludes no updates are required to the existing draft Official Plan.
- Section 4.7 speaks to transportation and includes policy directions to address development adjacent to railways, include directions for the Zoning By-law relating to setbacks to different road classifications and update policies related to Provincial highways.

- Section 4.8 speaks to servicing and stormwater management and concludes that the existing draft Official Plan is consistent with the policies of the PPS and requires no further updates.
- Section 4.9 speaks to minerals and mineral aggregates and includes policy directions to update mapping errors, update permitted uses, and criteria to establish a new or expanded mineral or aggregate operations through a Zoning By-law Amendment.
- Section 4.10 speaks to protecting public health and safety and recommends mapping updates to identify certain hazards, updates to the floodway terminology, additional policies regarding prohibited uses and minor updates to improve clarity and useability of the Official Plan.
- Section 4.11 speaks to cultural heritage resources and the conservation of heritage properties through heritage management plans, indigenous communities' engagement, and the prohibition of development site alteration.

To address the issues identified above, changes to section numbers, location of sections and formatting are required. Further, the draft Official Plan will be moved over to a new JLR template.

2.0 Legislative Changes

2.1 *Planning Act* Changes

The Planning Act provides the statutory authority for land use planning in Ontario and provides the basis for municipalities and planning boards to prepare their OPs. There have been several amendments to the Planning Act since the approval of the three current Official Plans. Through our review, we confirmed that the existing draft Official Plan has been modified to address the following changes to the Planning Act:

- Update the frequency (every 10 years) with which a new Official Plan must be reviewed under Section 26(1) of the Planning Act as per Bill 73, Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, 2015 .
- Include provisions related to additional residential units as set out in Bill 108, More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019 and Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022.
- Revise the type of development subject to Site Plan Control as set out in Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022.
- Updated pre-consultation policies as per Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024
-

The draft Official Plan will need to be further updated to address the following changes to the Planning Act related to:

- The requirement for a public consultation strategy for applications for Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment, or Draft Plan of Subdivision as modified through Bill 73, Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, 2015.
- The requirement for official plans to contain policies which identify goals, objectives, and actions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, as modified through Bill 139, Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017.

- Policies which permit Councils to delegate authority to pass zoning by-laws that are considered “minor” through Bill 13, Supporting People and Businesses Act, 2021. A list of examples of potentially minor zoning by-law amendments is provided in the recommended policy and includes most Holding provisions, temporary use by-laws and site-specific exceptions to implement conditions of consent approval.
- Changes to parkland dedication requirements through Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, which decreases the required maximum alternative parkland contribution provision to 1 hectare per 600 units and cash-in-lieu of parkland requirement of 1 hectare per 1000 units.
- Information that is required to be shown on a site plan as modified through Bill 23 to remove consideration for exterior design unless it relates to sustainable design elements and accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- Revised provisions for secondary suites, as modified through Bill 108, More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019.
- Clarification that site plan control does not apply to most residential units containing less than 10 units. Exceptions are made for lands within 120m of a shoreline or natural heritage feature, or within 300m of railways.
- Pre-Consultation meetings with planning authorities are now optional as a result of Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, and cannot be required.
- Consistency with the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement.

Policy Directions:

The following is a list of recommended policy updates to meet the requirements of the Planning Act:

- Create a new Section 3.7.3 Climate Change, to include policies relating to climate change that introduces goals, objectives and policies for adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of climate change.
- In Section 5 Plan Implementation and Administration, include the requirement for a Public Consultation Strategy as a as part of a complete application for an Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment, Plan of Subdivision, Plan of Condominium and Consent applications.
- In Section 5.2.5 Site Plan Control, provides required items that may be regulated under a Site Plan Control Agreement to align with Bill 23 and exclude the consideration of exterior design unless it relates to sustainability, safety, or accessibility among other changes.
- In Section 4.10 Subdivision of Land, subsection 4.10.4 Public Parkland speaks to parkland requirements for all types of development, where parkland dedication requirements do not apply, the alternative parkland dedication contribution of 1 hectare per 600 units and cash-in-lieu of parkland policies shall be established.
- In Section 5 - Plan Implementation and Administration, include policies which permit the Planning Board to delegate the authority to pass by-laws under section 34 of the Planning Act, that are of a minor nature, to a committee of Council or an individual who is an officer or employee of the municipality.
- Section 5.5 updates the policies for pre-consultation to reflect changes to the Planning Act.

3.0 Growth Plan for Northern Ontario

Land use planning decisions in Ontario shall conform to or not conflict with provincial plans. The Planning Area is subject to the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, 2011 (the Growth Plan). The Growth Plan is an economic growth plan for Northern Ontario approved under the Places to Grow Act, 2005.

The Growth Plan is not principally a land use plan; however, there are some linkages to the Growth Plan which are reflected in the Official Plan. These include:

- Promoting diversification of traditional resource-based industries
- Integrating infrastructure investments with land use planning
- Promoting Indigenous peoples participation in the economy

Section 3.4.3 of the Growth Plan encourages municipalities to support and promote healthy living by providing for communities with a diverse mix of land uses, a range and mix of employment and housing types, high quality public open spaces and easy to access local stores and services.

Section 4.2 promotes the preparation of long-term community strategies supporting the goals and objectives of the Growth Plan, focusing on:

- Economic, social, and environmental sustainability
- Accommodation of the diverse needs of all residents, now and in the future
- Optimizing use of infrastructure
- Creating a high quality of place
- Creating a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive community identity built on unique local features
- Local implementation of regional economic plans where applicable

Per Section 4.2.2, municipalities are encouraged to align their OP policies with these long-term community strategies and to use tools to facilitate land use planning that implements these strategies.

Section 4.2.3 encourages collaboration with Indigenous communities in land-use planning.

<u>Policy Directions</u>

It is recommended that the Official Plan be updated to:

- Permit a range of commercial, tourism, agricultural, and resource-based uses in alignment with the existing and emerging priority economic sectors in Northern Ontario.
- Promote healthy living by permitting a diverse range and mix of land uses, densities, housing types, and employment uses in the Village designation
- Prioritize the creation of complete communities that are healthy and accessible to all residents. The policies require development to make optimal use of existing infrastructure and public services. A high quality of life and quality of life reflective of the unique local community character should be promoted in several parts of the Plan.

- Promote cooperation and collaboration with nearby Indigenous communities.

4.0 Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

Land use planning decisions in Ontario shall be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement. The first draft of the Official Plan was prepared to be consistent with the 2014 version of the PPS. It has since been updated to reflect changes made in 2020, and finally to be consistent with the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement which replaced the 2020 PPS on October 20, 2024.

Section 4.0 of this report contains a detailed review of the requirements of the 2024 PPS including policy direction for the Draft OP.

4.1 Growth and Settlement

As per Section 2.1.3 of the PPS, the Draft Official Plan is required establish a planning horizon of 20-30 years, in this case from 2025 to 2051 based on Ministry of Finance growth forecasts.

4.1.1 Historical Population Growth

Since 2001, the planning area has grown by 9.98% from 3,597 to 3,956, resulting in an overall annual growth rate of 0.5%. This contrasts with a historical population decline of -0.3% in the District of Algoma for the same period. For the Townships, the growth since 2001 is shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Historical Population of Planning Area Municipalities

Municipality	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
MMAA	1452	1550	1464	1609	1513
Tarbutt	466	388	396	534	573
Laird	1021	1078	1057	1047	1121
Johnson	658	701	750	751	749
TOTAL	**3597**	**3717**	**3667**	**3941**	**3956**

4.1.2 Population estimates

As part of this review, JLR has updated the population and private occupied dwellings estimates using the Province's Projection Methodology and Summer 2025 Ministry of Finance Population Projections.

While the Projection Methodology is a guideline, and there remains flexibility for modifying approaches and assumptions in the calculation of household and population needs, planning authorities must at the base determine their overall share of the population of their census division (CD), in this case the District of Algoma. The 2024 Projection Methodology Guideline offers two ways of doing this, Method A and Method B. Method A (Population Share) accounts for the Planning Area's share of the CD's projected population based on Ministry of Finance projections and historical population share. Method B uses the CD forecasted growth as the basis and allocates a portion of this growth to the Planning Area based on historical local growth patterns trends.

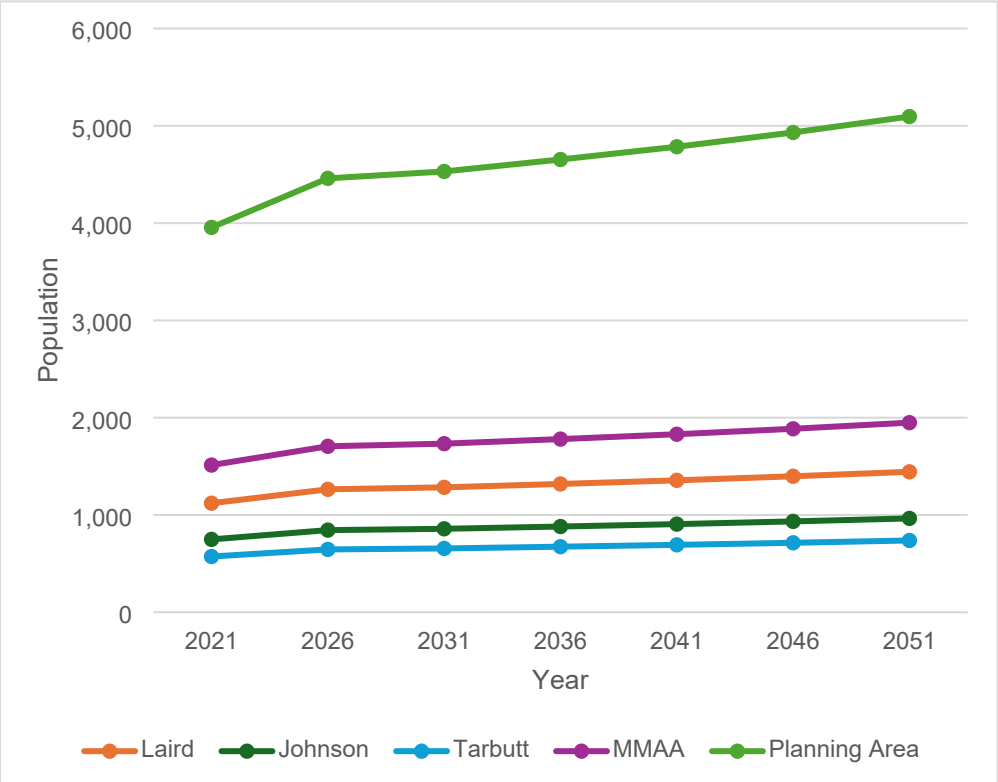
The 2021 Statistics Canada population of the Planning Area shown in Table 1 reflects 3.48% of the District of Algoma's population, which was 113,777, and forms the basis of the proportional share (Method A) population estimate. As the overall growth in the Algoma Census Division was negative leading up to the 2021 Census, the growth share (Method B) population estimate was null and replaced with a manual adjustment of 0.25% to reflect the projected growth in the Algoma Census Division over the planning horizon. Method A outputs have been used as the basis for population, housing and employment estimates within this report.

Table 2 summarizes population estimates for each Township within the Planning Area over the planning horizon. Based on these estimates, the population of the Planning Area is projected to increase from 3,956 people in 2021 to 5,095 people in 2051.

Table 2: Projected Population Growth for Municipalities and Planning Area

Municipality	2026	2031	2036	2041	2046	2051
MMAA	1706	1733	1780	1830	1886	1949
Tarbutt	646	656	674	693	714	738
Laird	1264	1284	1319	1356	1398	1444
Johnson	844	858	881	906	934	965
TOTAL	4460	4531	4654	4785	4932	5095

Figure 1: Population Estimates - 2021 to 2051



Source: Statistics Canada, Ontario Ministry of Finance population projections (Method A – Population Share)

The population projections provided by the Ministry of Finance at the Census Division level consider and reflect demographic trends, including fertility, mortality, and migration, and because of this, these considerations were not specifically considered through the preparation of the Planning Area population projections.

Population estimates based on the Method A population share methodology will be included within the draft Official Plan:

- The total population across the Planning Area is expected to increase from 3,956 people in 2021 to 5,095 people in 2051.

4.1.3 Private occupied dwellings estimates

Household estimates are based on the number of private dwellings occupied by usual residents in Statistics Canada community profiles between 2001 and 2021. Private dwelling occupied by usual residents refers to a private dwelling in which a person or a group of persons are permanently residing and includes private dwellings whose usual residents are temporarily absent from time to time.

The number of occupied private dwellings increased from 1,365 in 2001 to 1,584 in 2021. Age cohorts, and more specifically, age of primary household maintainer, are fundamental to understanding the projected housing needs within the community.

Using the historical Census data for single year of age, as well as age of primary household maintainer and MOF Census Division projections, an extrapolation of age structure was carried forward within the population projection for each Township. This exercise resulted in an understanding of headship rate and total projected household needs by Township to 2051. Applying the assumption that household formation rates will not vary significantly from the 2021 Census (as noted in the Proposed Updated Projection Methodology Guideline 2024), 2021 headship rates by age cohort has been carried forward across the planning horizon.

Using the Population Share Projection (Method A), the total household needs over the planning horizon from present to 2051 are 418 units, with the most significant need (+173) occurring between 2021 and 2026 due to the projected growth in across the Planning Area. Table 3 outlines the projected household needs over the planning horizon.

Table 3: Household Projections based on Household Maintainer

	2021 Census	2026	2031	2036	2041	2046	2051
Total Households	1,584	1,757	1,785	1,832	1,833	1,939	2,002

Housing need projections consider factors beyond headship rates, including local vacancy targets, market contingency factors, and a suppressed household formation adjustment. For the purposes of this background report, the following assumptions have been applied based on best practices applied in other Northern Ontario municipalities:

- Vacant Rate: 3% based on CMHC Rental Market Report – Sault Ste Marie
- Market Contingency Factor: 2% for uncertainties

- Suppressed Formation Adjustment: 1% due to local availability constraints and limited rental market

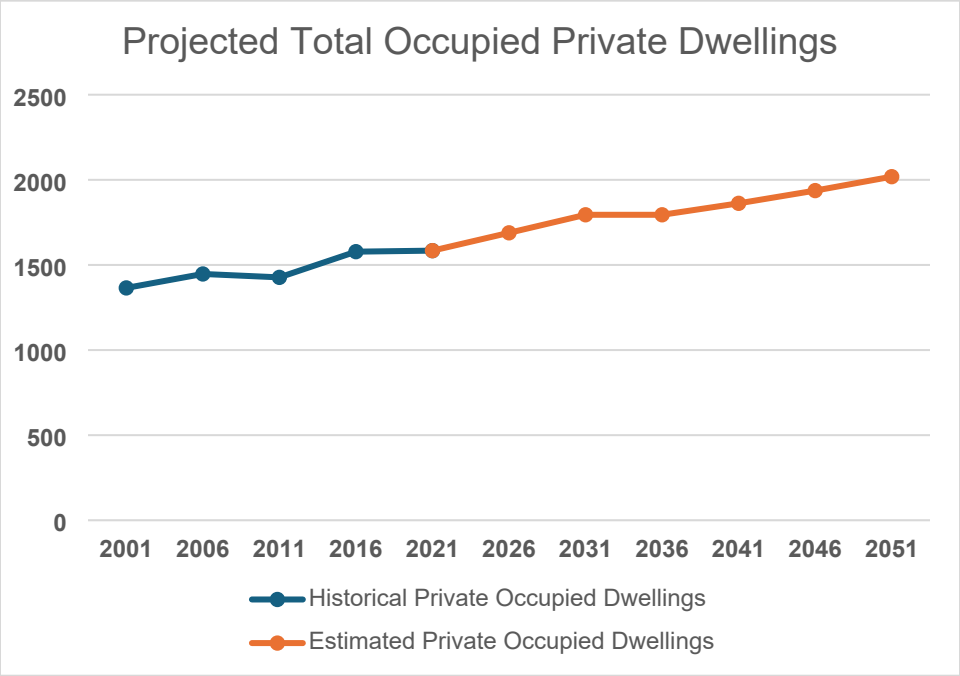
For Townships with settlement areas (MMAA and Johnson), a residential intensification target of 80% was used to concentrate projected growth within these areas. Similarly, within these Townships, an employment intensification target of 100% was applied. For Townships without settlement areas (Laird and Tarbutt), no intensification targets for growth were applied.

Single-detached dwellings were the dominant dwelling type in 2021 consisting of 98% of all total occupied private dwellings in the planning area. High density development in the form of apartment, flat in a duplex is significantly limited and represents less than 1% followed by semi-detached house and movable dwelling with 0.3% each. Private households are predominantly owned as opposed to rented. To encourage a greater mix of housing types, targets by density type for new units were established for each Township.

Municipality	Low Density	Medium Density	High Density
MMAA	100%	20%	0%
Tarbutt	100%	0%	0%
Laird	100%	0%	0%
Johnson	80%	20%	0%

Overall, there is an expected need for 418 new residential units across the Planning Area to accommodate the estimated population at 2051. This increase represents an annual need of approximately 14 new builds per year between 2021 and 2051.

Figure 2: Occupied Private Dwellings Estimates in the Planning Area



Source: Historic Statistics Canada, Ontario Ministry of Finance population projections

4.1.4 Land Supply

Section 2.1.3 of the PPS states that sufficient land shall be made available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for a time horizon of at least 20 years, but not more than 30 years, informed by provincial guidance. Planning for infrastructure and public service facilities may extend beyond this horizon. For the purposes of the Draft Official Plan, a 25-year land supply estimate has been prepared.

An initial land supply was prepared in conjunction with the previous Draft Official Plan; however, it has been updated to reflect the subdivision potential of the two settlement areas as well as the building potential and rural severance potential of vacant rural land. An initial land supply analysis has been completed to assist with understanding growth and development potential within the Desbarats to Echo Bay planning area. Based on the determination of population estimates by 2051, this section examines the potential of the planning area to meet land supply needs over the next 25 years.

In addition to ensuring a long-term land supply, the Planning Area is required pursuant to section 2.1.4 a) of the PPS to maintain at all times the ability to accommodate residential growth for at least 15 years through lands that are designated and available for residential development.

Furthermore, Policy 2.1.4 b) states that planning authorities shall maintain land with servicing capacity sufficient to provide at least a three-year supply of residential units available through lands suitably zoned including units in draft approved or registered plans.

Vacant land property codes provided by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) were reviewed for each Township, alongside Official Plan land use designation and zoning, and with consideration to local knowledge and observations provided by Planning Board Administration.

Table 4 below provides the number of vacant lots and land area per each Township and the total for the planning area. As of June 2025, there were 1047 vacant lots in the planning area with a total land area of 11,929 hectares. Approximately 8 of these lots are vacant commercial lands with a total land area of 4.79 hectares. Six of these lots are located within the settlement areas of Echo Bay and Desbarats.

Across the Planning area, 338 lots with 2,449 hectares are waterfront, while 709 lots having 9,480 hectares are not. Within the Echo Bay Settlement Area there are 12 vacant lots covering eight hectares. There is one vacant commercial lot totaling 0.2 hectares. Within the Desbarats Settlement Area there are 30 vacant residential lots covering 9.6 hectares. There are five vacant commercial lots totaling 1.86 hectares.

Table 4: Vacant Lots

	Vacant Residential		Vacant Commercial	
	Lots	Total Area (ha)	Lots	Total Area (ha)
Entire Planning Area – Non Waterfront	709	9480	8	4.79
Entire Planning Area - Waterfront	338	2449	0	0
Echo Bay Settlement Area	12	8	1	0.2
Desbarats Settlement Area	30	9.6	5	1.86

The total number of vacant residential land is 1047 and the total number of vacant commercial lots is eight.

When considering future land supply, the planning board can also take into account new lot creation. The OP permits lot creation through subdivision or consent, in compliance with provisions set by the Zoning By-Law. The average Zoning-By-laws provisions for lot severance require minimum lot frontages of 45m and minimum lot area of 0.2 ha within settlement areas. As per Table 5, across the Planning Area, there are currently approximately 136 vacant residential non-waterfront lots and 0 commercial non-waterfront lots with severance potential.

Table 5: Vacant Lots with Severance Potential

	Vacant Residential		Vacant Commercial	
	Lots	Total Area (ha)	Lots	Total Area (ha)
Planning Area – Non Waterfront	136	2731	0	0
Planning Area - Waterfront	44	799	0	0
Echo Bay Settlement Area	3	5.4	0	0
Desbarats Settlement Area	6	8.6	0	0

It is forecasted that between 2021 and 2051, 418 lots will be required to accommodate new households within the Planning Area. There are over 1047 vacant residential lots within the

Planning Area, demonstrating that there is sufficient land supply to accommodate residential growth. Further there are a number of vacant lots within the existing settlement areas and vacant lots with further land division potential. Notwithstanding the existing vacant land supply, there are existing larger lots within the settlement areas that may be further divided and present opportunities for infill development, thereby ensuring that growth can be directed to the settlement areas in accordance with provincial directives.

While a comprehenive analysis of commercial land needs was not undertaken, there are still a number of vacant commercial lands across the planning board. As previously mentioned, there are a number of larger occupied lots within the settlement area, some identified for future development, that could be further subdivided to accommodate both residential and commercial growth.

4.1.5 Complete Communities

Section 2.1.6 of the PPS states that Planning Authorities shall support the creation of complete communities by accommodating a range and mix of land uses, housing options, transportation options, employment, public service facilities, and other institutional uses (including schools and associated child care facilities, long-term care facilities, places of worship, and cemeteries), recreation, parks and open space, and other uses to meet long-term needs.

Planning authorities must also improve accessibility for people of all ages and abilities by addressing land use barriers which restrict their full participation in society and improve social equity and overall quality of life for people of all ages, abilities and incomes, including equity-deserving groups.

Policy Directions:

The following is a list of recommended policy updates to ensure consistency with the 2024 PPS:

- Create a new Growth Management Section which:
  - Includes information in relation to population, employment and housing forecasts to reflect the most recent statistical information from Statistics Canada, 2021 Census and Ministry of Finance population projections.
  - Includes a new subsection which speaks to settlement area boundary expansions and adjustments, consistent with section 2.3.2 of the 2024 PPS.
  - Includes policies that promote intensification, where appropriate.
  - Includes policies to align development phasing and development with asset management planning.
- In Section 2.1, Village Designation, include policies to broaden the mix of uses to be provided in the settlement area to meet the needs of existing and future residents. The Village designation will promote the creation of complete, accessible communities.
- In Section 4.10.4, include policies which provide for the use of open spaces that meet the needs of all age groups and abilities.

4.2 Housing

Section 2.4 of the PPS states that planning authorities shall provide an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities to meet projected needs of current and future residents of the regional market area.

Planning authorities shall establish and implement targets for the provision of housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income households, and coordinate land use planning and planning for housing with service managers to address the full range of housing options including affordable housing needs.

Section 2.2 b) requires planning authorities to permit and facilitate all housing options required to meet social, health and economic requirements of current and future residents, including additional needs housing and needs arising from demographic changes and employment opportunities. In addition, planning authorities need to permit all types of residential intensification, including development and redevelopment of underutilized commercial and institutional sites (e.g., shopping malls and plazas) for residential use, development of new housing options within previously developed areas, and redevelopment that results in a net increase in residential units in accordance with Policy 2.3.1.3.

PPS 2.2 c) promotes densities for new housing that efficiently use land, resources, infrastructure and public services and support active transportation.

Policy Directions:

The following is a list of recommended policy updates to ensure consistency with the 2024 PPS:

- Section 1.1.8 Affordable Housing includes additional policies which promote affordable housing, partnerships with the Algoma District Social Services Administration Board (ADSSAB) and establishes an affordability target of 20%. The Draft Official Plan will be circulated to ADSSAB for comment on any additional policy linkages required to coordinate land use planning with planning for housing.
- Section 2.1, Village Designation, in the new Official Plan will:
    - Permit all housing options required to plan for the demographic changes anticipated over the life of the Plan, including additional needs housing and housing for older persons.
    - Encourage the delivery of housing for additional needs including group homes, crisis care, shelter for the homeless, victims of domestic violence, and housing for older persons. Section 2.1 Village designation policies.
    - Permit all types of residential intensification in the fully serviced settlement areas. Redevelopment of under-utilized commercial and institutional sites for residential use will be encouraged.
    - Promote the adaptive re-use of under-utilized commercial and institutional properties for housing.
- Section 4.1 of the Draft Official Plan will include a general provision to permit additional residential units as-of-right on parcels of urban residential land.
- Section 2.3 and 2.4 will permit additional residential units outside of the settlement area in accordance with the PPS.

4.3 Rural and Agricultural Areas

4.3.1 Agricultural Areas

Lands designated Agricultural Area are areas where prime agricultural land predominates, which includes Canada Land Inventory (CLI) Classes 1, 2, and 3 soils in this order for protection and, therefore, have potential for agricultural production, areas demonstrating a concentration of farming activity, as well as pockets of lesser valued soils within the greater context of a prime agricultural area. The CLI of Soil Capability for Agriculture; Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) information on land in agricultural use; and local knowledge were used to identify the Agricultural designation on Schedule 'A'.

Per Section 4.31.1 of the PPS, planning authorities must use an agricultural systems approach, based on provincial guidance, to maintain and enhance a geographically contiguous agricultural land base and support and foster the long-term economic prosperity and productive capacity of the agri-food network. The agricultural system is defined as:

> "*a system comprised of a group of inter-connected elements that collectively create a viable, thriving agri-food sector. It has two components:*
>
> *a) An agricultural land base comprised of prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas. It may also include rural lands that help to create a continuous productive land base for agriculture; and*
>
> *b) An agri-food network which includes agricultural operations, infrastructure, services, and assets important to the viability of the agri-food sector."*

Thus, the agricultural system includes lands in both the Rural and Agricultural designations, but could also include certain land uses in settlement areas. For example, feed mills, dairy bottling facilities, vegetable markets, microbreweries, abattoirs, are all examples of components of the agri-food network that could be located in settlement areas. Locally, this would include the Johnson Farmers Market in Desbarats.

PPS 4.3.1.2 requires planning authorities to identify and designate prime agricultural areas for long-term use for agriculture. Prime agricultural areas are defined as lands where prime agricultural lands predominate. Prime agricultural lands are specialty crop areas and/or Canada Land Inventory (CLI) Class 1, 2 and 3 lands. Prime agricultural areas include prime agricultural lands, as well as associated CLI Class 4 through 7 lands, and additional areas with a concentration of farms which exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture. Prime agricultural areas may be identified by a planning authority based on provincial guidance or informed by mapping obtained from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Agribusiness and the Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs.

A Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) study was undertaken as part of the Official Plan Review in order to identify and designate a prime agricultural area. The area determined to be a prime agricultural area through the LEAR study is designated Agricultural in the Draft OP. Lands outside of the Village and Shoreline designations that are not considered prime agricultural areas, have generally been designated Rural.

Section 4.3.2.1 of the PPS permits three primary uses of land in prime agricultural areas. These include agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, and on-farm diversified uses. Agricultural uses generally include a principal residential dwelling associated with an agricultural operation, in accordance with Section 4.3.2.4. These uses are further defined below:

> "**Agricultural uses:** means the growing of crops, including nursery, biomass, and horticultural crops; raising of livestock; raising of other animals for food, fur or fibre, including poultry and fish; aquaculture; apiaries; agro-forestry; maple syrup production; and associated on- farm buildings and structures, including, but not limited to livestock facilities, manure storages, value-retaining facilities, and housing for farm workers, when the size and nature of the operation requires additional employment"
>
> "**Agriculture-related uses:** means those farm- related commercial and farm-related industrial uses that are directly related to farm operations in the area, support agriculture, benefit from being in close proximity to farm operations, and provide direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity."
>
> "**On-Farm Diversified uses:** On-farm diversified uses: means uses that are secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property, and are limited in area. On-farm diversified uses include, but are not limited to, home occupations, home industries, agri-tourism uses, and uses that produce value-added agricultural products, and electricity generation facilities and transmission systems, and energy storage systems"

The policies of the Draft OP are further guided by "Guideline on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas", a provincial guideline produced by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Agribusiness and the Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs.

Permitted agricultural and on-farm diversified uses need to be compatible with the principal agricultural operation and surrounding agricultural operations. All types, sizes, and intensities of agricultural uses and normal farm practices need to be permitted in the Agricultural designation.

Section 4.3.5 of the PPS provides limited circumstances for additional non-agricultural uses in prime agricultural areas. These include:

1) Extraction of minerals, petroleum and mineral aggregate resources; or
2) Limited non-residential uses, provided:
    a. The land does not comprise a specialty crop area
    b. The proposed use complies with the MDS formulae
    c. There is an identified need in the planning horizon identified in the OP for additional land to accommodate the proposed use
    d. Alternative locations have been evaluated and there are no other reasonable locations which avoid prime agricultural areas; and there are no reasonable alternative locations in prime agricultural areas with lower priority agricultural lands

The PPS requires that land uses in the Rural and Agricultural designation shall comply with the Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) formulae, as amended from time to time.

Up to two additional residential units are permitted in prime agricultural areas per Section 4.3.2.5 provided that at least one of the residential units is located within or attached to the principal dwelling. Any additional residential units must meet the following criteria:

- Compliance with the MDS Formulae
- They are compatible with and would not hinder surrounding agricultural operations
- They have appropriate sewage and water services
- Any public health and safety concerns are addressed
- They are limited in scale, and located within, attached to, or in close proximity to the principal dwelling or farm building cluster
- They minimize the amount of land taken out of production.

Section 4.3.3 of the PPS provides four scenarios where lot creation in prime agricultural areas can be considered. Lot creation is permitted for:

1) Agricultural uses, where the lot size is appropriate for the type of agricultural use common in the area, and sufficiently large enough to maintain flexibility for future operators (i.e., generally 40 hectares)
2) Agricultural-related uses provided that any lot is limited to the minimum size needed to accommodate the proposed use and sewage and water services (typically no more than two hectares)
3) A new residential lot per farm consolidation for a residence surplus to an agricultural operation, provided:
    e. The lot is limited to the minimum size needed to accommodate the use and appropriate sewage and water service (i.e., 0.8 to 1 hectare maximum);
    f. Residential use (i.e., a dwelling or additional residential units) are prohibited on the remnant parcel created by the severance.
4) Infrastructure, where the facility or corridor cannot be accommodated through the use of easements or rights-of-ways.

Land can only be removed from a prime agricultural area at the time of a settlement area expansion.

4.3.1.2 Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) Study

The Planning Board undertook a Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) study to review, identify, and designate prime agricultural areas in the region. The study is based on two components, the Land Evaluation and the Area Review. The study takes information on soil classifications such as data from the Canadian Land Inventory (CLI), and applies it to one-hectare sections within the Planning Area. This maps out soil capacity and characteristics and merges it with the National Annual Crop Inventory data to effectively outline existing and potential agricultural uses in the region. The analysis also considers the level of land fragmentation of the agricultural land base shown in the existing property fabric, as this prevents the establishment of a strong agricultural system.

An Agricultural Advisory Committee was formed as part of the evaluation process, comprised of a member of the Board and a local farmer from each member municipality. The goals of the Committee were to review the findings of the LEAR study and use their local knowledge of the lands to provide input to verify and refine the data. Each municipality within the Planning Area

was able to review the data and recommendations from the Committee and provide further comments. A draft of the recommendations was shared with JLR for review and comment, who in turn, sent their recommendations back to the municipalities. Most recommendations were included in the changes to be made to the Prime Agricultural Areas, and the associated Official Plan Schedules will be updated to reflect these changes.

For details of the LEAR study, please refer to Appendix A.

4.3.2 Rural Lands

The PPS distinguishes between Rural Lands and Rural Areas. Rural Areas "means a system of lands within municipalities that may include rural settlement areas, rural lands, prime agricultural areas, natural heritage features and areas, and resource areas." Rural lands "means lands which are located outside settlement areas and which are outside prime agricultural areas." Thus, rural lands are a component of the rural area. In the Planning Area, this includes all land use designations outside the Village designation.

Permitted uses on Rural Lands per Section 2.6.1 of the PPS are much broader than the permitted uses for prime agricultural areas. These include the management and use of resources; resource-based recreational uses (including seasonal dwellings not intended as permanent residences), residential development and lot creation where site conditions are suitable for the provision of appropriate sewer and water services, agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, on-farm diversified uses and normal farm practices, home occupations, home industries, cemeteries and other rural land uses.

PPS 2.6.2 and 2.6.3 promote development that can be sustained by rural service levels, and which is appropriate to the infrastructure that is planned or available and avoids the need for the uneconomical expansion of infrastructure.

The PPS promotes a diversified rural economy by protecting agriculture and other resource-related uses and directing non-related developments to areas which will minimize constraints on these uses.

New land uses on rural lands must comply with the Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Formulae, as amended from time to time.

<u>Policy Directions for Agricultural Areas:</u>

<u>It is recommended that the Official Plan:</u>

- Include a statement of support for the agri-food network and include a new general provision for the agricultural system.
- Update Section 2.4.1 "Permitted Uses" to permit agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses, as well as other permitted uses such as open space, passive recreation, certain agri-tourism and farm exhibition type uses, and aggregate extraction as an interim use.
- Include Minimum Distance Separation Formulae I and II in the policies of Section 3.4 "Land Use Compatibility".

- Provide p criteria to permit residential use as a habitable residence surplus to a farm operation in Section 2.4.4 “Development Policies”.
- Include lot creation policies for the Agricultural designation which align with Section 4.3.3 of the PPS.

Policy Directions for Rural Lands:

It is recommended that the Official Plan:

- Update the permitted uses in the Rural designation and include a range of uses intended for consistency with PPS 2.6.1. The Shoreline designation permits single-detached dwellings and seasonal dwellings in Section 2.5.1.
- Include policies intended to support and promote the agri-food network and recognize the importance of the local agricultural system.
- Require all development in the Rural designation to comply with the Minimum Distance Separation Formulae as amended from time to time.

4.4 Natural Features and Areas

The policies for natural heritage features and areas remain unchanged since the 2014 PPS.

Section 4.1 of the PPS states that natural features shall be protected in the long term and establishes policies to protect these key features through restricting site alteration and development within the key features and adjacent lands; however, it is not the intent of the PPS to limit existing agricultural uses to continue.

Section 4.1 protects natural heritage features and areas such as significant wetlands and significant coastal wetlands, significant wildlife habitat (i.e., deer wintering habitat, moose aquatic feeding habitat, nesting sites, etc.,), fish habitat, areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSI), and habitat of endangered and threatened species.

The PPS also requires the protection of adjacent lands to the above features, which are areas where potential negative impacts to these features could occur. The distances for most natural features and areas are established in the 2005 “Natural Heritage Reference Manual”, published by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. The PPS requires that potential negative impacts to the natural heritage features and areas be determined on a site-specific basis via an environmental impact study (EIS). The EIS can be scoped depending on the nature of the development and the particular natural heritage feature or area of concern.

Adjacent lands distances to habitat of endangered and threatened species are set out in the regulations of the Endangered Species Act, as they can differ from species to species.

Policy Directions:

It is recommended that the Official Plan

- Establish adjacent lands distances to natural heritage features such as fish habitat, provincially significant wetlands, coastal wetlands, ANSI’s, significant wildlife habitat, and habitat of endangered and threatened species in Section 3.8.1 of the Draft OP.

- Require an Environmental Impact Statement prior to development adjacent to the above-noted features and areas.
- Include specific policies for protecting fish habitat, habitat of endangered and threatened species, provincially significant and locally significant wetlands, ANSI's, significant wildlife habitat are provided in sections 3.8.2.1 through 3.8.2.6.
- Clarify that nothing in section 3.8 is intended to limit the ability of normal farm practices to continue.

4.5 Employment and Economic Development

Based on 2021 Census data, the planning area has a participation rate of 60.1% in the labour force. Unemployment rate is estimated to 6.1 % compared to a rate of 12.7 % in the Algoma District. The Townships of Johnson Township (2.7%) followed by Tarbutt (3.2%) have the lowest unemployment rates.

Table 6: Labour Force Status, 2021

	Macdonald, Meredith and Aberdeen Additional, Township	Tarbutt and Tarbutt Additional, Township	Laird, Township	Johnson, Township	Planning Area
In the labour force	750	315	560	365	1990
Employed	685	310	505	350	1850
Unemployed	65	10	55	10	140
Not in the labour force	475	210	400	235	1320
Participation rate (%)	61	60	58.3	60.3	59.9
Employment rate (%)	55.7	59	52.6	57.9	56.3
Unemployment rate (%)	8.7	3.2	9.8	2.7	6.1

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021

As of the 2021, only 21% of workers are self-employed in the planning area. Employees on a permanent basis represent 85% of the total class of employees. The remaining 15% represents temporary employees. The share of permanent employee jobs is the highest in MMAA (42%) followed by Laird (30%) during the same year. The share of self-employed workers is the highest in Johnson with 45% of the total self-employed workers in the planning area.

The economic base in the Desbarats to Echo Bay planning area is predominantly industrial, agricultural, and services oriented. The largest employing industry is Health care and social assistance that employs 16% of the labour force aged 15 years and over. The Townships of MMAA and Laird have the highest shares of labour force in the health care industry.

The following largest industries are Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting with (10.7%), Construction with (10.4%) and Manufacturing (with 10.2%). Agricultural and related jobs are mainly located in Johnson Township with 52% share of jobs in the agricultural sector. There are

not significant disparities in the distribution of jobs in the construction and manufacturing sectors.

Labour force employed in retail trade and public administration represents 8.1% in both industries. The highest number of jobs in public administration and retail trade are located in the Townships with the greatest population size: MMAA in the first place followed by Laird Township. The least employing industries are Management of companies and enterprises (0.0%), Utilities (0.5%) and Information and cultural industries (0.5%).

The majority of occupations are in Trades, transport and equipment operators, and related occupation (27%), Sales and services occupations (16%) and Business, finance and administration occupations (14%).

Based on 2021 census data, 25% of employed labor force aged 15 years and over works at home. Only 1% of the labour force works outside of Canada. Most in-person jobs are located in MMAA Township (42%) followed by Laird Township (28%).

Only 7% of employees commute to workplaces within the Planning Area, and 91% commute to a place of work in a different census subdivision. We can thus infer that the majority of employees likely commute to work in the nearby City of Sault Ste. Marie given the availability of employment opportunities in that municipality.

Section 2.8.1 of the PPS supports the creation of a modern economy, and promotes economic competitiveness by providing for an appropriate range and mix of employment, institutional and mixed uses and ensuring the necessary infrastructure is available to support these uses. Planning authorities should provide for a diversified economic base, including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for employment uses which support a wide range of economic activities and ancillary uses, and take into account the needs of existing and future businesses. Strategic sites for investment should be identified, and planning authorities should monitor the availability and suitability of employment sites, including market-ready sites, and seeking to address potential barriers to investment.

Intensification of employment uses in compatible, compact, and mixed-use developments is supported as part of achieving complete communities. The PPS requires consideration of land use compatibility between employment uses and sensitive uses (e.g., residential, schools, hospitals, long-term care facilities).

Based on the aging population and the tendency of residents to commute to jobs in the City of Sault Ste. Marie, it is not anticipated that employment lands need to be identified in the Planning Area.

<u>Policy Directions:</u>

It is recommended that the Official Plan:

- Introduce the term “sensitive use” in Section 3.4. “Land Use Compatibility”, and include policies which further detail the D6 Guidelines and criteria in which an incompatible use may be permitted in accordance with Section 2.8 and 3.5 of the PPS.
- Include policies to promote economic prosperity, consistent with Section 2.8 of the PPS.

4.6 Public Spaces, Recreation, Parks, Trails and Open Space

Section 3.9 of the PPS contains policies which promote healthy, active, and inclusive communities by planning public streets, spaces, and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of persons of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, fostering social interaction and facilitating active transportation and community connectivity.

Planning authorities are required to plan for the needs of persons of all ages and abilities in the distribution of a full range of publicly-accessible built and natural settings for recreation. This includes parks, open spaces, public facilities, trails and water-based resources where practical. Planning authorities should promote access to shorelines, and recognize provincial parks, conservation reserves and other protected areas, and seek to minimize impacts on these areas.

Policy Directions:

It is recommended that the Official Plan:

- Promote the dedication of parkland as part of the subdivision process
- Include parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu policies in Section 4.12 (General Policies Applying to all Public Parkland)
- Require public access to shorelines in the policies for the Shoreline designation

4.7 Transportation

Section 3.2 of the PPS states that the transportation systems should be safe, energy efficient and should be appropriate to address projected needs, and support use of zero emissions vehicles.

Section 3.3 of the PPS protects infrastructure and transportation corridors. Planning authorities need to plan for and protect corridors for transportation, transit, and electricity generation and transmission systems to meet current and projected needs. Development on and adjacent to existing or planned corridors must be compatible with, and supportive of, the long-term purposes of the corridor and should be designed to avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate negative impacts and adverse effects from the corridor and transportation facility.

Preservation and re-use of abandoned corridors for purposes which maintain the corridor's integrity and linear characteristics should be encouraged where feasible.

Policy Directions:

It is recommended that the Official Plan:

- Include policies to facilitate a safe and appropriate transportation network consisting of public and private roads, rail corridors, trails and airports.
- Include additional wording regarding MTO's permit control area and discouraging direct access to provincial highways for new developments.
- Include policies which state that required setbacks from provincial highways, public and private roads will be established through the Zoning By-law.

- Include policies for development in proximity to railways such as setbacks and the need for a Noise Impact Study.

4.8 Servicing and Stormwater Management

Section 3.6 of the PPS contains direction for planning for sewage, water and stormwater. Planning shall accommodate forecasted growth in a timely manner that promotes the efficient use and optimization of existing municipal sewage services and municipal water services and existing private communal sewage services and private communal water services.

Planning must ensure that these services are provided in a manner that can be sustained by the water resources upon which the services rely; be feasible and financially viable over their life cycle; protect human health and safety and the natural environment (including the quality and quantity of water) and must align with comprehensive municipal planning for these services where applicable. Planning should promote water and energy conservation and efficiency.

The PPS requires that land use planning and servicing considerations should be integrated at all stages of the land use planning process. Opportunities to allocate, and re-allocate if necessary, any unused system capacity of municipal water services and municipal sewage services to support the efficient use of these services to meet current and projected needs for increased housing supply should be considered.

Sections 3.6.2 through 3.6.5 of the PPS sets out several servicing options for planning authorities. Municipal sewage and municipal water services are the preferred form of servicing for settlement areas to support protection of the environment and minimize potential risks to human health and safety. For clarity, this includes both centralized servicing systems and decentralized servicing systems.

Where these services are not available, planned or feasible, private communal sewage services and private communal water services are the preferred form of servicing for multi-lot/unit development to support protection of the environment and minimize potential risks to human health and safety.

Where municipal sewage services and municipal water services or private communal sewage services and private communal water services are not available, planned or feasible, individual on-site sewage services and individual on-site water services may be used provided that site conditions are suitable for the long-term provision of such services with no negative impacts.

At the time of the official plan review or update, planning authorities should assess the long-term impacts of individual on-site sewage services and individual on-site water services on the environmental health and the financial viability or feasibility of other forms of servicing set out in policies 3.6.2 and 3.6.3.

Calculations of the operation of the sanitary sewer and water system undertaken as part of our review indicate that the Echo Bay sanitary sewer system was operating at a daily capacity of 34% and the water treatment plant was operating at a daily capacity of 28%.

In Desbarats, calculations undertaken indicated the sanitary sewer system is operating at a daily capacity of approximately 30% and the water system was operating at a daily capacity of 33%.

Partial services, meaning either municipal sewage services combined with private water, or public water services combined with private sewage services, are permitted in three circumstances:

- Where they are necessary to address failed individual on-site sewage and individual on-site water services in existing development
- Within settlement areas to allow for infilling and minor rounding out of existing development on partial services provided that site conditions are suitable for the long-term provision of such services with no negative impacts
- Within rural settlement areas where new development will be serviced by individual on-site water services in combination with municipal sewage services or private communal sewage services

There is one area in the Echo Bay settlement area where development is on the basis of partial services, corresponding with the lands designated Mixed-Use. These lands are serviced with partial municipal water and private sewage services.

Policy Directions

It is recommended that the Official Plan:

- Specify that full municipal water and sewage services are the preferred forms of servicing in the Echo Bay and Desbarats settlement areas.
- Require a servicing report prior to significant new development to ensure that new development can be accommodated in the existing public water and sewage systems.
- Permit private sewage and water services on lands outside of the settlement areas where site conditions are suitable with no negative impacts. Policies for ensuring no negative impacts include requirements for confirming a potable source of drinking water, confirmation of septage haulage capacity, requirements for Health Unit approval of new septic systems, and minimum lot area requirements that reflect provincial guidance.
- Permit the continued use and infill and minor rounding out of development on partial servicing in the Mixed-Use designation, where such services can be provided with no negative impacts.
- Establish detailed policies regarding stormwater management, including the requirement for a stormwater management plan for certain development applications, the requirement to mitigate potential negative impact of development, and to protect vegetation.
- Include policies which require municipalities to use asset management plans, protect water and sewage services, ensure the financial viability of their systems and protect human health and the natural environment.

4.9 Minerals and Mineral Aggregate Resources

4.9.1 Minerals

Section 4.4.1 requires mineral mining operations to be identified and protected from development that would preclude or hinder their expansion or continued use or which would be incompatible for reasons of public health and safety or environmental impact.

There are currently no producing mines within the Planning Area; however, Section 4.4.2 applies which requires known deposits of mineral resources or areas of significant mineral potential to be identified. Development and activities on or adjacent to these areas which would preclude or hinder the establishment of new operations or access to the resource is only permitted where the resource use is not feasible; where the proposed land use or development serves a greater long-term public interest; and issues of public health, safety and environmental impact area addressed.

Rehabilitation of mineral operations is required to accommodate subsequent uses after extraction. Extraction is permitted on prime agricultural areas provided the site is rehabilitated.

Section 5.3 of the PPS requires that development on, abutting or adjacent to lands affected by Abandoned Mine Information System (AMIS) sites (former mineral mining operations, mineral aggregate operations or petroleum operations) may only be permitted if rehabilitation or other measures to address and mitigate known or suspected hazards are underway or have been completed.

Lands having high metallic mineral potential are shown on Figure 3. The darker shades of purple represent areas having high potential for the discovery of mineral resources. AMIS sites are shown on Figure 4.

Figure 3: Metallic Mineral Potential Estimation (MMPET) Index Mapping

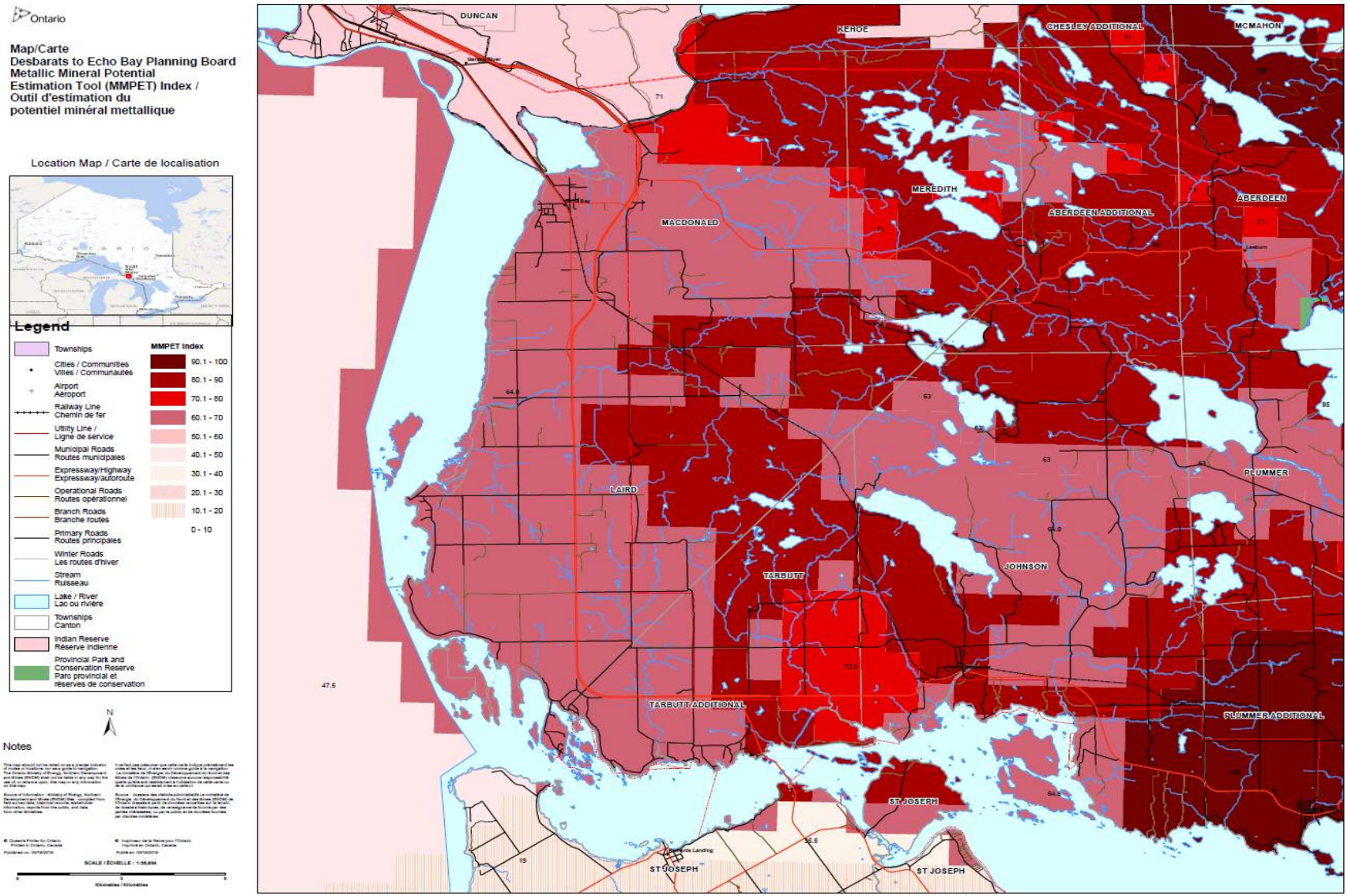
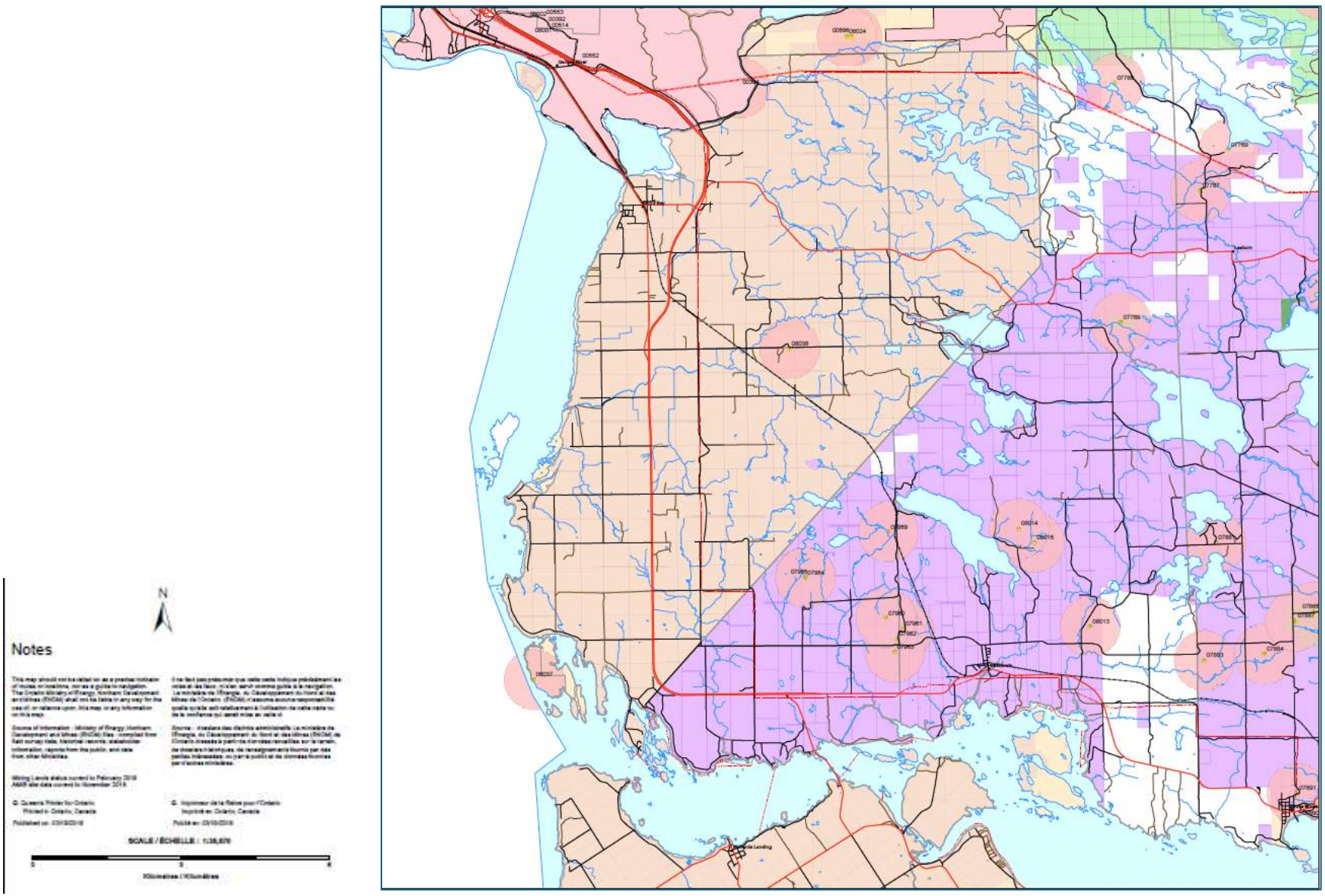


Figure 4: Map Showing Abandoned Mine Inventory System (AMIS) Sites in the Planning Area



Policy Direction:

It is recommended that the Official Plan:

- Identify on Schedule “C” lands having high mineral potential, reflective of background information (Metallic Mineral Potential Estimation Tool Mapping) provided by the Ministry of Mines at the outset of the planning program.
- Include policies for protecting mineral resources.
- Specify requirements of the Mining Act apply to any active mining operations or new operations.
- Include policies requiring consultation with the Ministry of Mines prior to any development adjacent to (e.g., within 1km) of an abandoned mine hazard site shown on Schedule “D”.
- Show the location of Abandoned Mine Information System (AMIS) sites on Schedule D.

4.9.2 Mineral Aggregates

Section 4.5.1.1 of the PPS states that mineral aggregate resources shall be protected for long-term use and where provincial information is available, deposits of mineral aggregate resources shall be identified. PPS 4.5.2.1 states that planning authorities may not require the demonstration of need as part of the process of planning for new mineral aggregate operations. The PPS requires that as much of the mineral aggregate resource as is realistically possible shall be made available as close to market as possible.

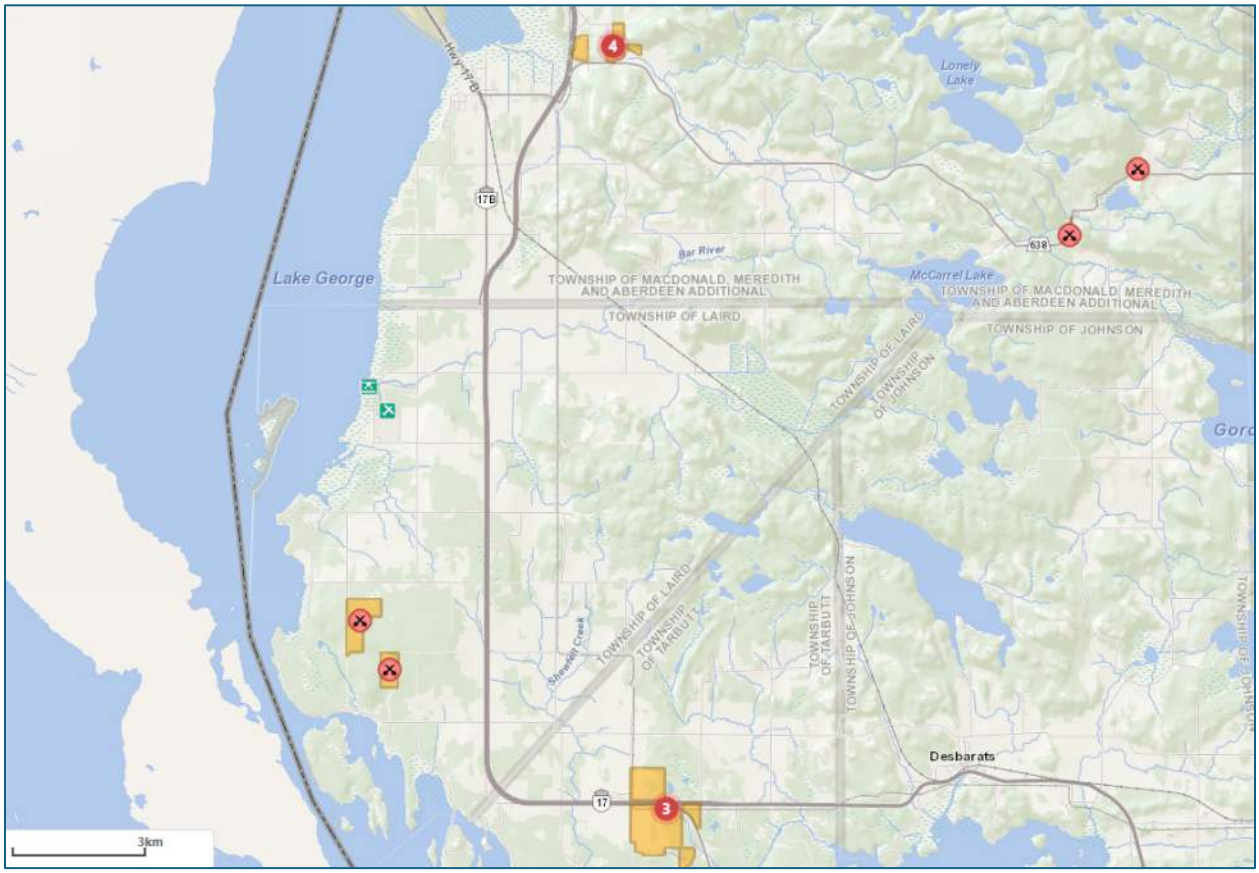
The PPS does require that any extraction occurs in a manner that minimizes social, economic, and environmental impacts.

Policy 4.5.2.4 requires that mineral aggregate operations be protected from development and activities that would preclude or hinder their expansion of continued use, or which would be incompatible for reasons of public health, public safety or environmental impact. Existing mineral aggregate operations shall be permitted to continue without the need for official plan amendment, rezoning or development permit under the Planning Act. Where the Aggregate Resources Act applies, only processes under the Aggregate Resources Act shall address the depth of extraction of new or existing mineral aggregate operations.

Policy 4.5.2.5 requires that in known known deposits of mineral aggregate resources and on adjacent lands, development and activities which would preclude or hinder the establishment of new operations or access to the resources shall only be permitted if: resource use would not be feasible; or the proposed land use or development serves a greater long-term public interest; and issues of public health, public safety and environmental impact are addressed.

A map of authorized mineral aggregate extraction sites in the Planning Area is shown on Figure 5.

Figure 5: Map of Authorized Mineral Aggregate Extraction Sites in the Desbarats to Echo Bay Planning Area



Policy Directions:

It is recommended that the Official Plan:

- Identify areas with sand, gravel and Nipissing diabase resources and authorized aggregate sites on Schedule C.
- Add policies for protecting adjacent uses from land use compatibility impacts from mineral aggregate development, and vice versa.

4.10 Protecting Public Health and Safety

Chapter 5 of the PPS speaks to protecting public health and safety by directing development away from natural or human-made hazards.

Section C5 of the previous draft Official Plan contains policies to protect public health and safety by directing development away or mitigating hazards associated with steep slopes, flooding, erosion, wildland fire, and other human made hazards.

4.10.1 Natural Hazards

Section 5.2 of the PPS speaks to natural hazards and directs development to areas outside hazardous lands associated with the shorelines of the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River System, and that associated with large inland lakes, small inland lakes, rivers and streams and hazardous sites (i.e. areas with unstable soils or bedrock).

Development is not permitted in dynamic beach hazards, and in the defined portion of the flooding hazard along connecting channels, which includes the St. Mary's River and Lake George. Development is also not permitted in the floodway and areas that would be rendered inaccessible to people and vehicles during times of flooding or erosion hazards, and/or dynamic beach hazards, unless it has been demonstrated that the site has access appropriate for the nature of the development and hazard.

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) has identified a flood elevation for Lake George and the St. Mary's River of 177.8 m G.S.C., plus a 15m horizontal allowance for wave uprush. Dynamic beach hazards have not been identified in the Planning Area at this time.

Section 5.2.4 of the PPS requires planning authorities to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate, as this may increase the risk associated with hazards.

Section 5.2.5 of the PPS permits development in certain areas associated with flooding hazards along rivers, streams, and small inland lakes where development is limited to that which much, by its nature, locate in a floodway. This includes passive uses which do not require buildings or structures, as well as flood and erosion control works.

Section 5.2.9 of the PPS directs development away from lands that are unsafe due to the presence of hazardous forest types for wildland fire. Development may be permitted in hazardous forest types for wildland fire in accordance with wildland fire assessment and mitigation standards.

Policy Directions:

It is recommended that the Official Plan:

- Update policies for flooding hazards and erosion hazards in line with the requirements of the PPS.
- Set a 177.8m C.G.D. flood limit for the St. Mary's River and Lake George of 177.8m plus a 15m wave uprush.
- Contain a policy allowing the Planning Board to require a detailed flood plain study where a flood line has not been determined.
- Prohibit development in floodplains except for flood and erosion control structures, shoreline stabilization, minor additions and/or renovations of existing structures that don't affect flood flows, minor recreational facilities that must by their nature locate near watercourses, and uses such as agriculture, forestry, conservation, wildlife management, and similar uses that do not require the placement of buildings and structures.
- Permits minor expansions/additions to existing dwellings affected by flood hazards provided the additions/expansions do not exceed 50% of the existing floor area.
- Add a placeholder policy to protect dynamic beach hazards should they be identified.

- Include a new section which mirrors the hazard policies in section 3.7.1 for erosion hazards.
- Contain detailed policies for considering the impacts to climate change associated with natural hazards when reviewing development applications.
- Contain policies for directing development to areas outside of lands that are unsafe for development due to the presence of hazardous forest types for wildland fire.

4.10.2 Human Made Hazards

Section 5.3 of the PPS prohibits development on or adjacent to a mine hazard, oil, gas, and salt hazards or former mineral mining operations, mineral aggregate operations or petroleum resource operations without a rehabilitation/mitigation plan. Further it specifies that sites with known or suspected contaminants must be assessed and remediated as necessary prior to development.

The previous draft Official plan contains policy direction which speaks to abandoned mined hazards, waste disposal areas, hazardous substances and contaminated sites. Only a minor policy modification is recommended to ensure to not require a Record of Site Condition for all properties with suspected contaminants but allow for instances where a Certificate of Property Use is issued for a contaminated industrial facility which includes several mitigation measures to permit is continued operation, in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act.

4.11 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

Section 4.6 of the PPS requires that protected heritage property, which may contain built heritage resources or cultural heritage landscapes, shall be conserved. Development or site alteration adjacent to protected heritage property is not permitted unless the heritage attributes of the protected heritage property are conserved.

With regard to archaeological resources, development is not permitted on lands containing archaeological resources, or in areas with archaeological potential, unless significant archaeological resources have been conserved. An area of archaeological potential is based on screening criteria recommended by the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

Planning authorities are encouraged to develop archaeological management plans for conserving archaeological resources, and proactive strategies for conserving significant built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes.

Section 4.6.5 of the PPS requires that planning authorities engage with Indigenous communities and ensure their interests are considered when identifying, protecting and managing archaeological resources, built heritage resources, and cultural heritage landscapes.

Policy Directions:

It is recommended that the Official Plan:

- Include policies which recognize the importance of protecting cultural heritage resources, including built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes, protected heritage property, and archaeological resources.

- Require a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) when development could potentially impact a protected heritage property.
- Note that the Heritage Act may be used to conserve, protect and enhance significant cultural heritage resources, and include rules for the establishment of a Municipal Heritage Committee by any of the Townships.
- Require applicants to consult with First Nation communities in the conservation of cultural heritage resources.
- Include policies for protecting archaeological resources, including adjacent lands to archaeological resources. The policies of the Draft OP require the submission of an archaeological assessment prepared by a licensed archaeologist and an Acknowledgement Letter from the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism when development is proposed in an area with archaeological potential.
- Include policies intended to protect any marine heritage resources in the planning area (e.g., former shipwrecks).

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Appendix A

LEAR Memo

Desbarats to Echo Bay Planning Board
C/o Tarbutt Township Office
27 Barr Road South R.R.#1 Desbarats,
***Ontario,* P0R 1E0**

MEMO

Date: May 27, 2025

To: Desbarats to Echo Bay Planning Board

From: Jared Brice, Desbarats to Echo Bay Planning Board Secretary-Treasurer

Subject: LEAR Study Results - Desbarats to Echo Bay Planning Board Region Joint Official Plan

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The 2024 Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) requires prime agricultural areas to be identified and designated in municipal official plans. As per the PPS, planning authorities are required to use an agricultural system approach, based on provincial guidance, to maintain and enhance a geographically continuous agricultural land base.

The Desbarats to Echo Bay Planning Board (Planning Board) have been working in consultation with J.L. Richards and Associates (JLR) to undertake a new joint Official Plan for the following municipalities that comprise the Planning Board region:

- The Township of Macdonald, Meredith and Aberdeen Additional
- The Township of Laird
- The Township of Tarbutt
- The Township of Johnson

Early consultation between JLR and the approval authority (the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing) provided a recommendation to the Planning Board to review the designation of prime agriculture areas in line with the methodology approved by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA).

What is a LEAR

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The LEAR, developed by OMAFRA, uses quantitative data to calculate the agricultural suitability of lands based on soil capability as well as other factors that affect agricultural potential, within the context of a given jurisdiction. LEARs score individual land parcels based on their agricultural potential whereby high-scoring parcels have the greatest agricultural potential.

LEARs also establishes a score threshold. Parcels that score below the established score threshold are typically considered as poor candidates for Prime Agricultural Areas designation.

DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 2: Land Evaluation and Area Review

LEAR Study MNR Soil Class

Legend

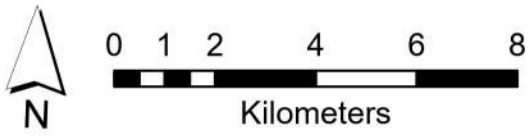
- Prime Agricultural Lands

MNR Soil Survey Complex

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- Organics
- Water

Roads

- Highway
- Other Roads



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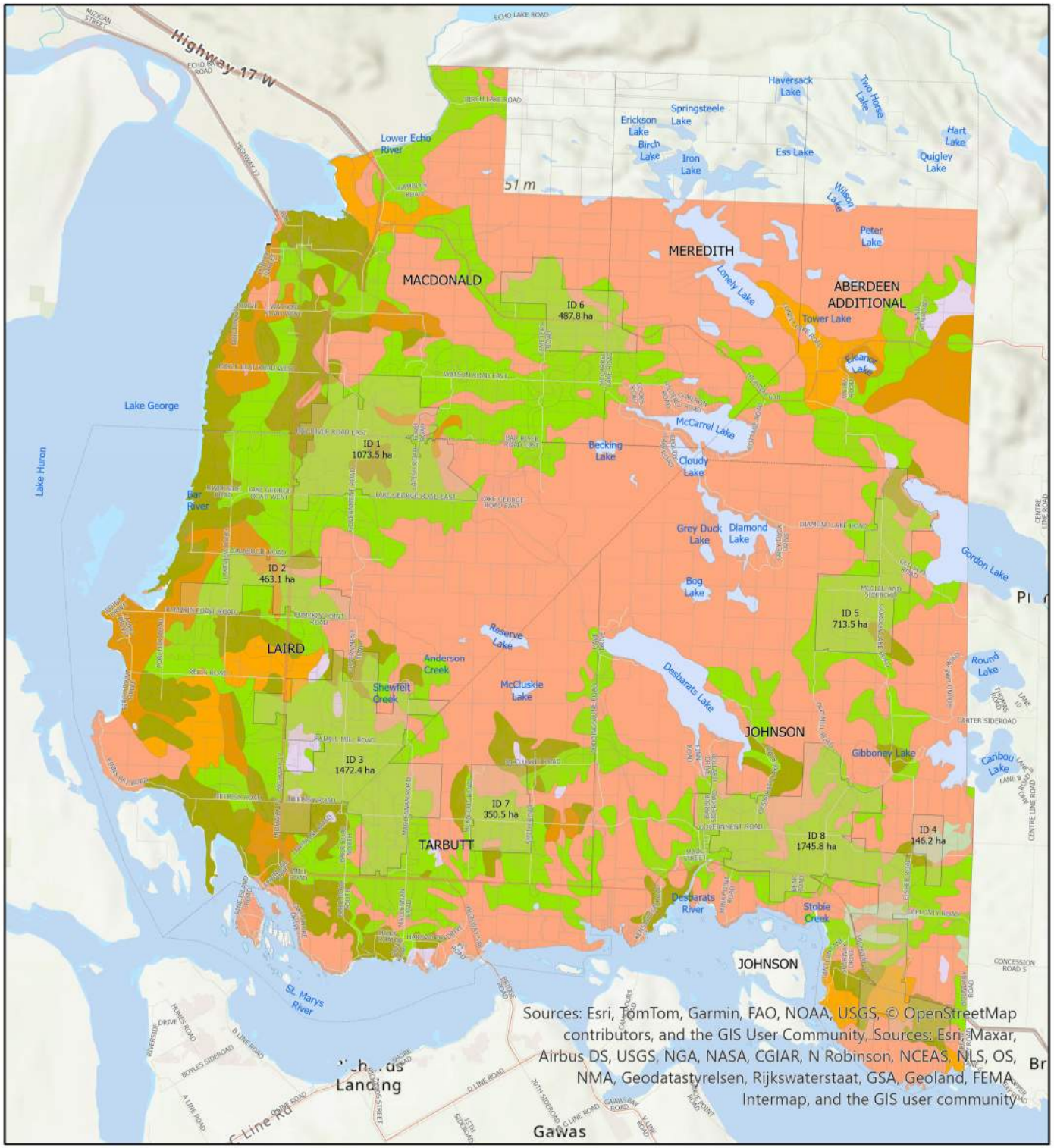


DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY PLANNING BOARD REGION

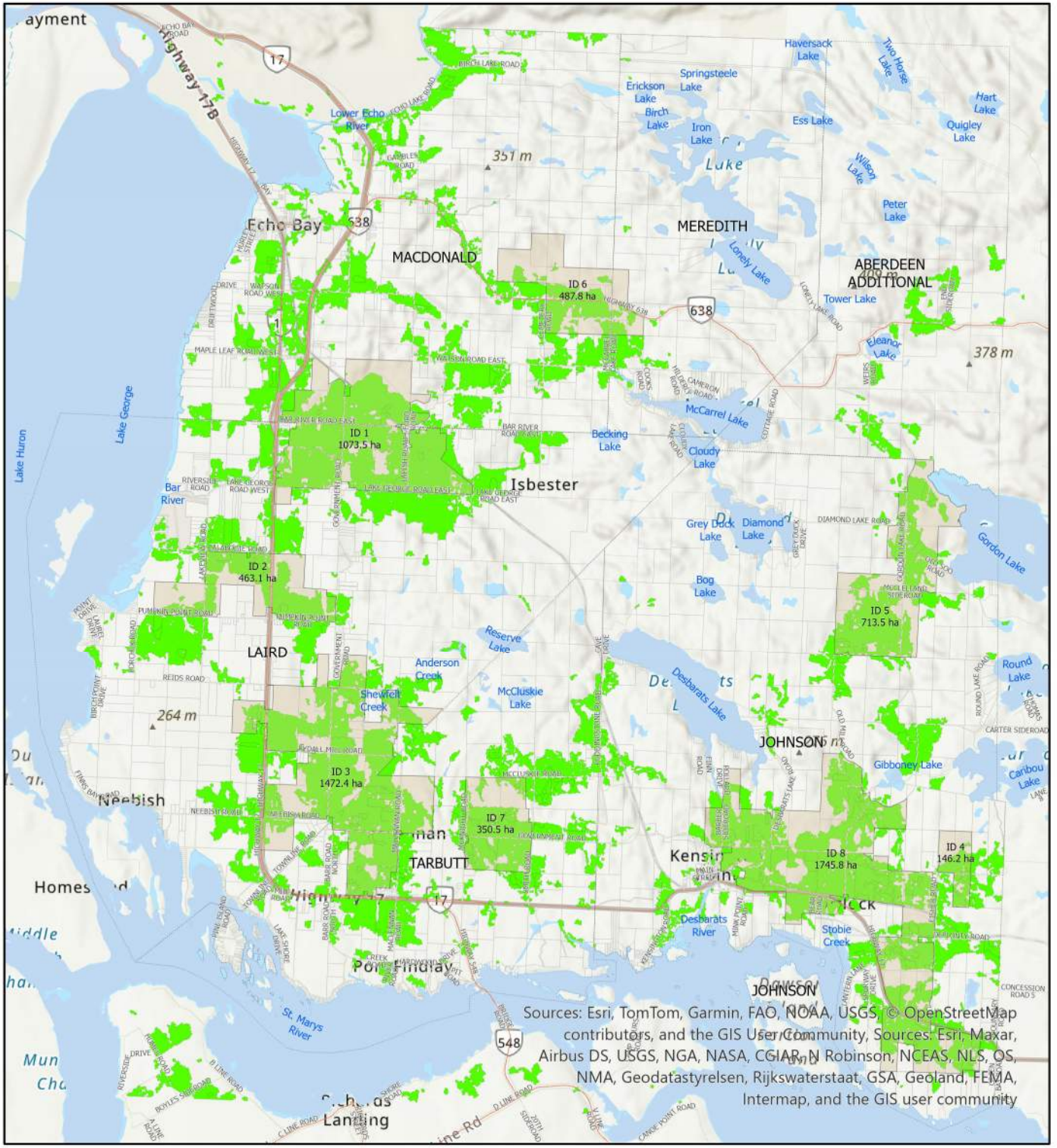
Figure 3: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Annual Crop Inventory Crop Areas

Legend

- Prime Agricultural Lands
- AAFC Annual Crop Inventory 2022

Roads

- Highway
- Other Roads



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DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 4: Land Evaluation and Area Review

Land Evaluation (LE) Factor 1 Score (60 points)

Legend

Roads

- Highway
- Other Roads

Factor 1 Score

- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60

N

0 1 2 4 6 8

Kilometers

Spatial Reference
Name: NAD 1983
UTM Zone 17N
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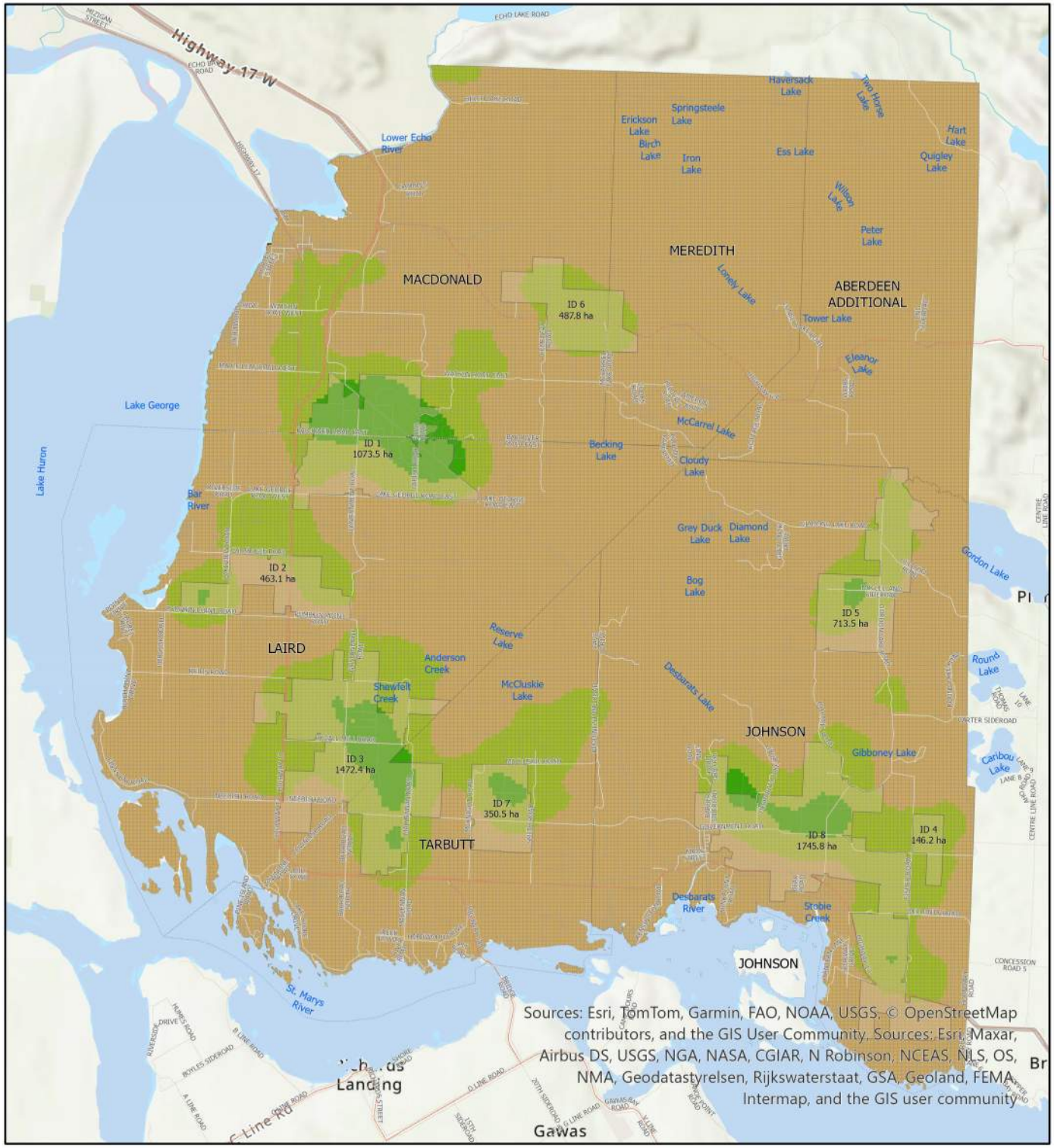
DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 5: Land Evaluation and Area Review

Area Review (AR) Factor 2 Score (30 points)



Legend

- Prime Agricultural Lands

Roads

- Highway
- Other Roads

Factor 2 Score

- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30

N

0 1 2 4 6 8

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DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY
PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 6: Land Evaluation and Area Review

Area Review (AR) Factor 3 Score (10 points)

Legend

Roads

- Highway
- Other Roads

Factor 3

- 1-3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

N

0 1 2 4 6 8

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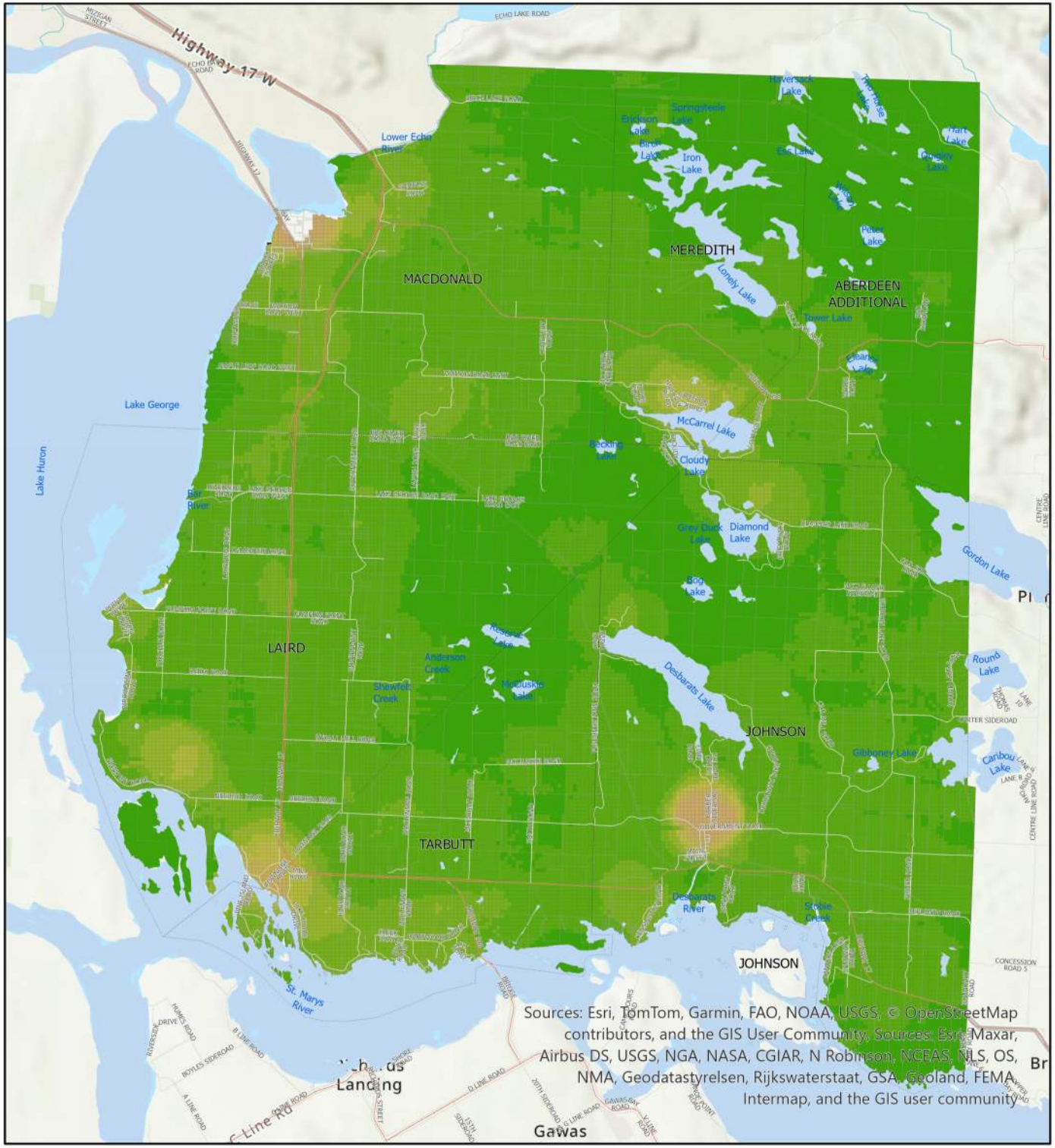


DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY
PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 7: Land Evaluation and Area Review

LEAR Study Total Score (100 points)

Legend

Prime Agricultural Lands

Roads

Highway

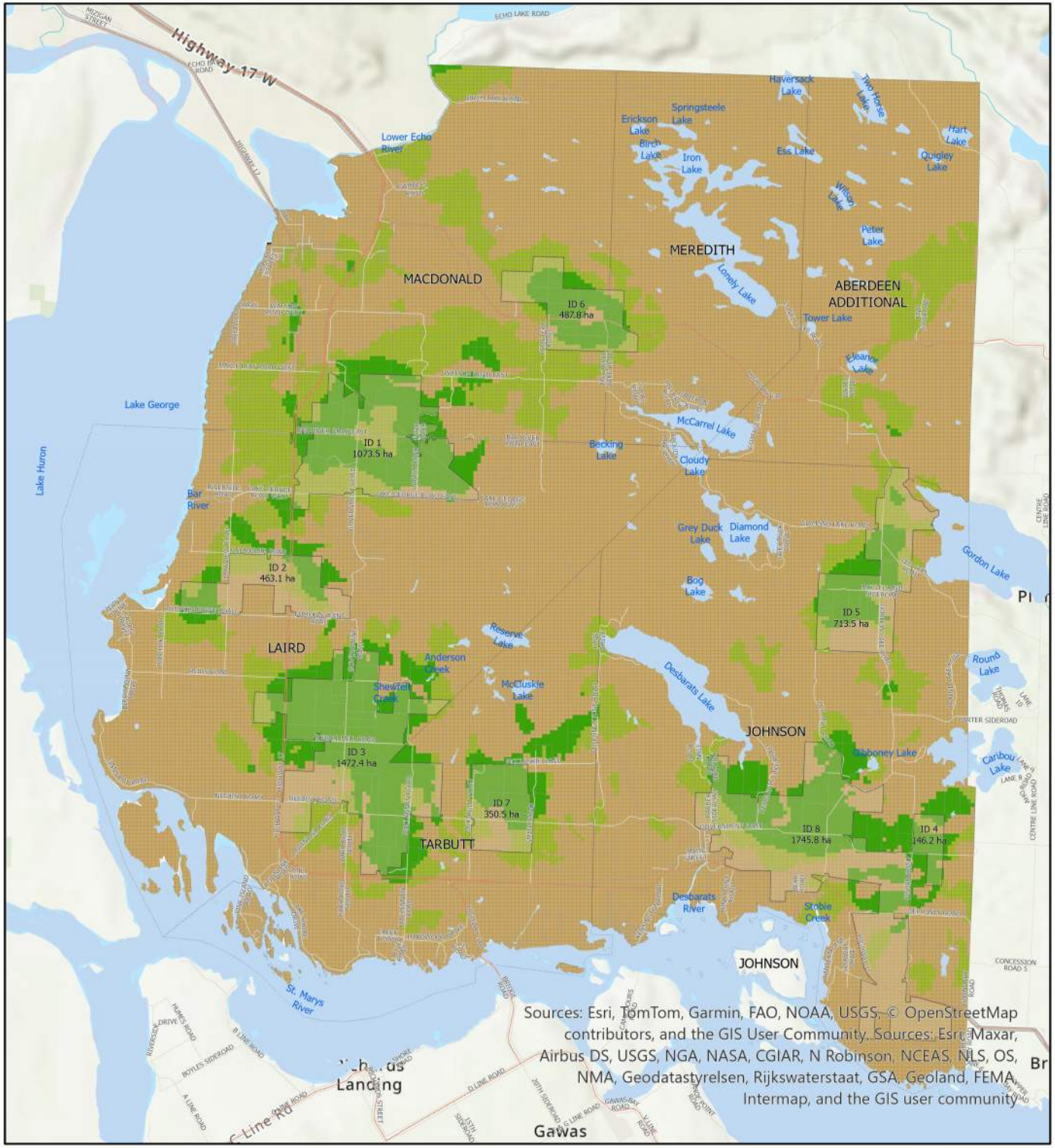
Other Roads

LEAR Study Total Score

0-59 Low Potential

60-69 Medium Potential

70-100 High Potential



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DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY
PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 8: Land Evaluation and Area Review

Agricultural Boundary with
LEAR Study Total Score (100 points)

Legend

Prime Agricultural Lands

Roads

Highway

Other Roads

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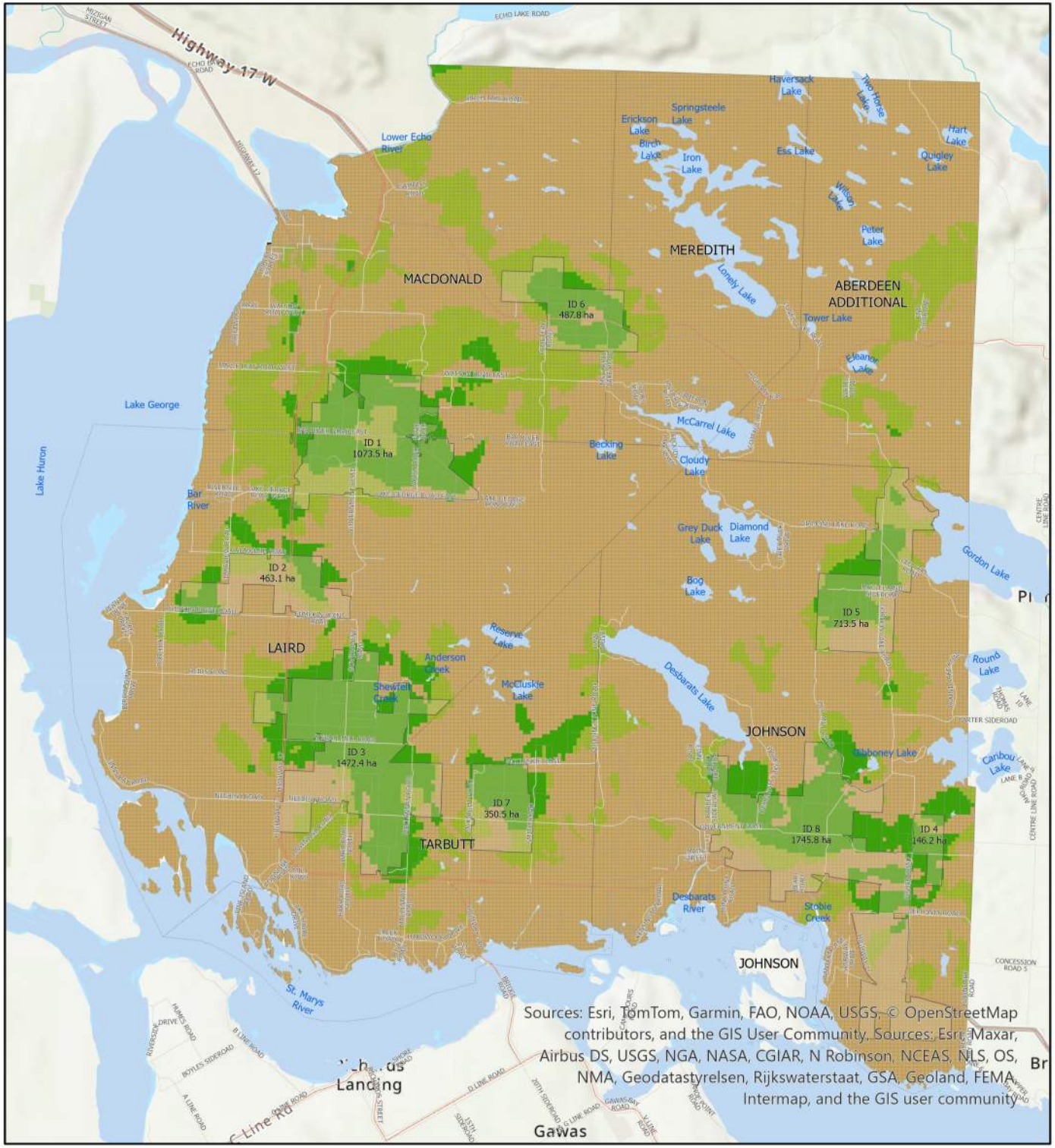

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The LEAR process provides authorities with jurisdiction a sufficient starting point for designating Prime Agricultural Areas. For instance, a parcel can have a high LEAR score but may not be designated as a Prime Agricultural Area. There area several other factors that influence the role in the identification of Prime Agricultural Areas including field verification, property owner/community feedback, additional reports and analysis and other planning priorities.

Each LEAR evaluation has two key components:

1. Land Evaluation (LE), which assesses inherent soil and climatic conditions for agriculture. OMAFRA's CLI mapping is used to identify and compare the agricultural capability for common field crops.
2. Area Review (AR), which considers other factors important to agricultural potential such as fragmentation of the land base and how land is used.

Scores from the LE and AR components are weighted and combined to provide an overall LEAR score for each evaluation unit in the study area. The highest scoring evaluation units represent areas with the greatest agricultural potential. Additional analysis and criteria are involved in delineating prime agricultural areas, including mapping areas with high LEAR scores to identifiable boundaries.

Methodology

The LEAR methodology for the Planning Board was developed using the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture (OMAFRA) Agricultural Systems Mapping Method technical document – January 2018

A) Background Data and Research - (see Appendices for Figures)

As required by OMAFRA, the Canada Land Inventory (CLI) Soil Capacity Classification dataset was used to evaluate soils in the Planning Board region. The Canada Land Inventory is a comprehensive multi-disciplinary land inventory of rural Canada. The CLI layer was originally based on soil surveys from the 1920’s to 1990’s and is subject to a continuously improving strategy. The CLI agriculture product shows the varying potential of a specific area for agricultural production. It indicates the classes and subclasses according to the Soil Capability Classification of Agriculture, which is based on characteristics of the soil as determined by soil surveys. Of the seven classes used to rate agricultural land capability Class 1 lands have the highest and Class 7 lands the lowest capability to preserve and strengthen agricultural land use activities.

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Evaluation Unit

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Evaluation Area

The intent to identify prime agricultural areas is to protect large, contiguous areas for agricultural uses. As part of the process it is important to identify large, contiguous areas, the LEAR scored each evaluation unit based on the characteristics of the evaluation unit and its surrounding evaluation area. As shown below, the evaluation area can be considered as a 750 m buffer around each evaluation unit.

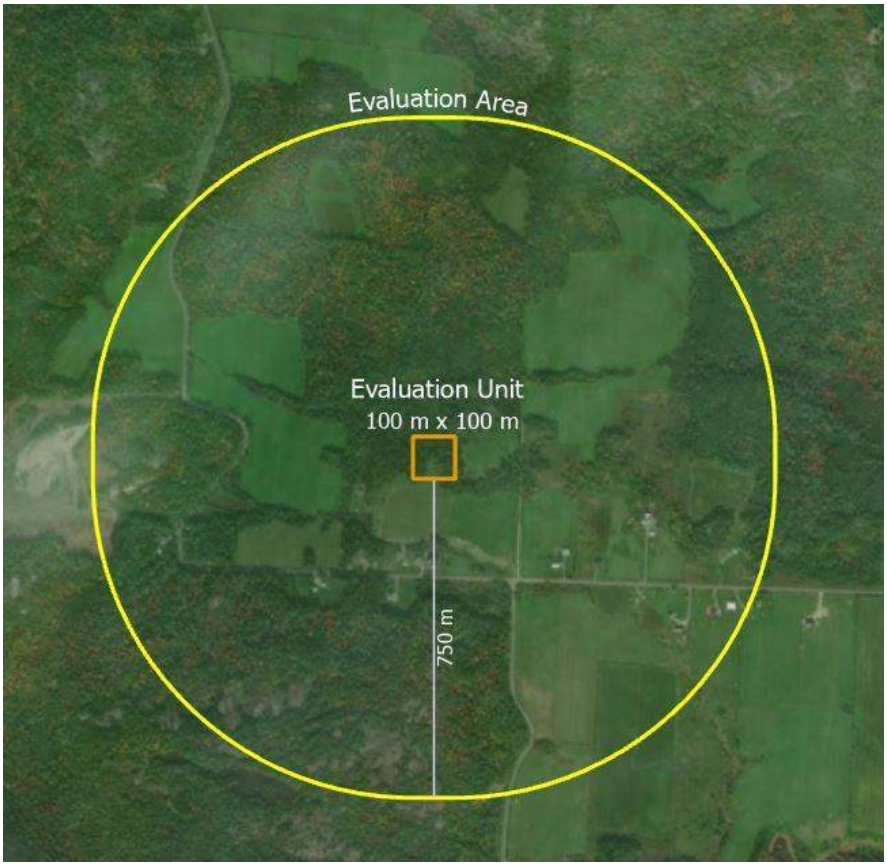

Figure 1: Evaluation Unit and Evaluation Area within the Planning Board area

C) Score Waiting Ratio

OMAFRA has consistently recommended weighting the LE component as, at minimum, 50 per cent of the total LEAR score. It is appropriate to weight the LE score more heavily because provincial policies emphasize the importance of land capability for agriculture when defining *prime agricultural areas* (e.g. the definition of *prime agricultural areas* focuses on areas where *prime agricultural lands* predominate). For the above reasons and in consultation with JLR, the Planning Board LEAR is based on an LE:AR ratio of 60 (LE) to 40 (AR). The AR factors selected are Factor 2: Agricultural production (30 points) and Factor 3: Parcel fragmentation (10 points). The factors and weightings selected for the Planning Board LEAR are outlined in Figure 2.

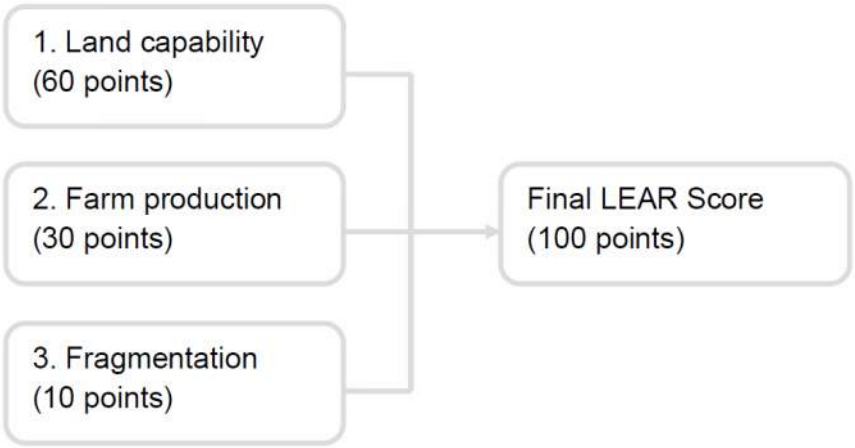

Figure 2: Factors and Weighting of Planning Board LEAR

D) Selected Land Evaluation (LE)

Factor 1: Land Capability (60 points)

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E) Area Review (AR)

Factor 2: Percentage of Land Agriculture

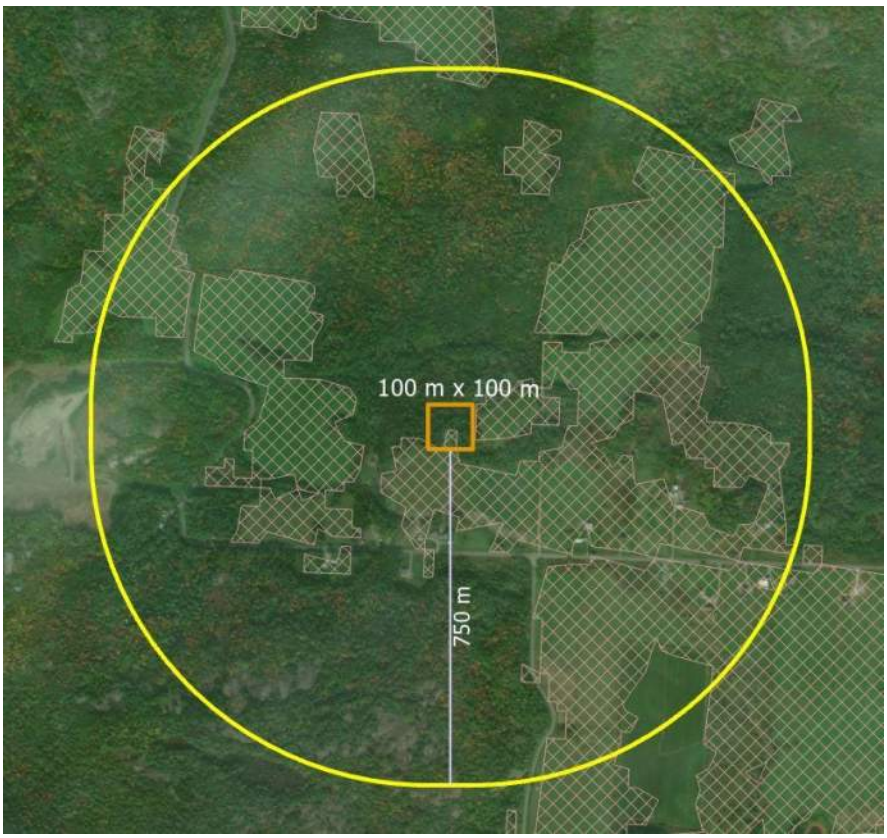
The definition of prime agricultural areas includes areas where there is a local concentration of farms which exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture. The area of land that is in agricultural production is an excellent indicator of agricultural potential. The Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) annual crop was used to determine whether and to what extent the evaluated areas are actively used for agriculture

The Factor 2 score is based on the percentage area in agriculture, calculated by the following equation:

Area of Agriculture Production * 100 = % area in agriculture

Evaluation area (256 ha)

The percentage of Agriculture is then multiplied by the weight factor of 2 (30 points).



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Fragmentation was assessed by counting the number of parcel centroids within the evaluation area surrounding each evaluation unit. Each centroid is located at the centre of each parcel. The distribution of scores was then converted to percentiles and multiplied by the weight of the factor (10 points) to contribute to the final score.

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F) Total Score

The total Score for each evaluation unit is calculated by adding Factor 1, 2 and 3 together giving a total out of 100.

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Possible scores for evaluation units ranged from 0 to 100. Each evaluation unit is categorized as high, medium or low scores. High scores are equal to or above 70 points; Medium scores are between 60 and 70 points; and low scores are below 60 points. High and medium score evaluation units were grouped together to create 250 ha or larger agriculture blocks. Further when identifying the Agricultural area OMAFRA suggests they should be delineated to an identifiable boundary such as a lot line roadway or watercourse and the agriculture areas should include the smaller low score evaluation unit areas that sit inside the larger agriculture blocks.

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Next Steps

- Planning Board approves LEAR study and Agriculture boundary
- LEAR Agriculture boundary integrated with the Draft Official Plan
- Draft Official Plan will be circulated to Province and other stakeholders and agencies

_____

Jared Brice
Secretary-Treasurer

Desbarats to Echo Bay Planning Board
C/o Tarbutt Township Office
27 Barr Road South R.R.#1 Desbarats,
***Ontario,* P0R 1E0**

MEMO

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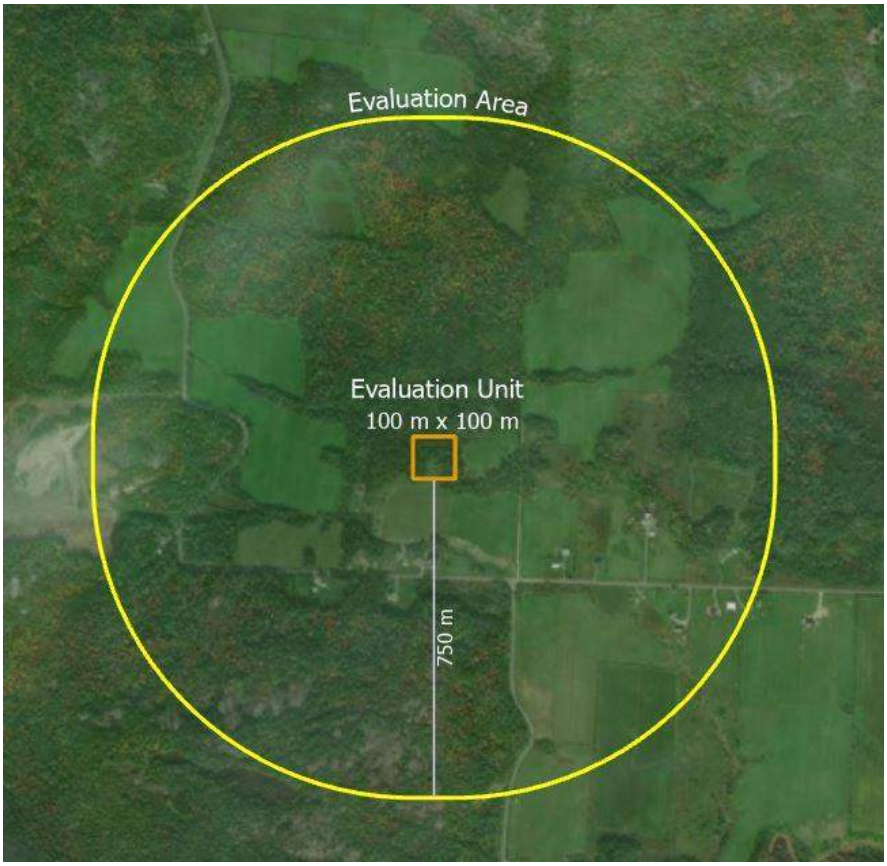

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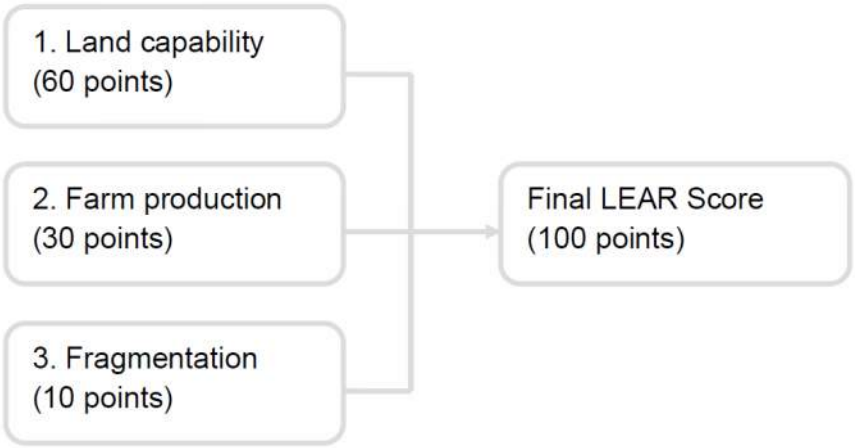

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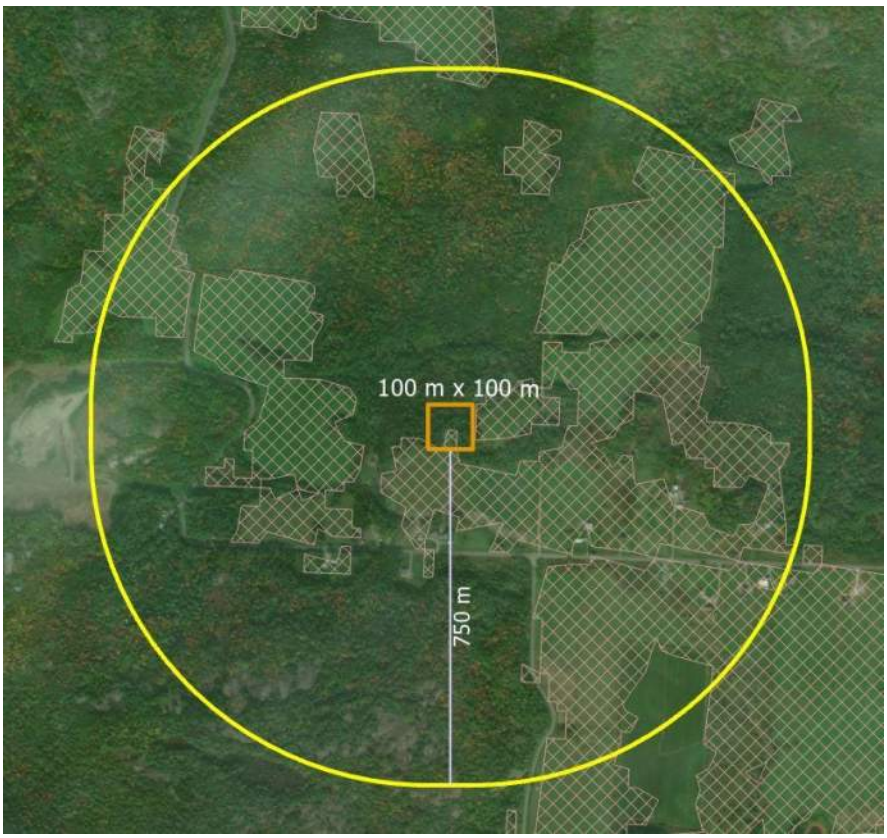

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The Draft Prime Agricultural Designations were then shared with Planners at J.L. Richards for review. J.L. Richards provided additional recommendations for Prime Agricultural Areas in all four Townships that comprise the Planning Board. The recommendations were shared with each member municipality for reconsideration. Each municipality re-reviewed the Prime Agricultural Areas proposed within their Township. Most of the recommended additions were included in the Prime Agricultural Areas.

Next Steps

- Planning Board approves LEAR study and Agriculture boundary
- LEAR Agriculture boundary integrated with the Draft Official Plan
- Draft Official Plan will be circulated to Province and other stakeholders and agencies

_____

Jared Brice
Secretary-Treasurer

DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 2: Land Evaluation and Area Review

LEAR Study MNR Soil Class

Legend

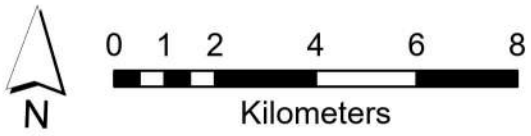
- Prime Agricultural Lands

MNR Soil Survey Complex

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- Organics
- Water

Roads

- Highway
- Other Roads



Spatial Reference
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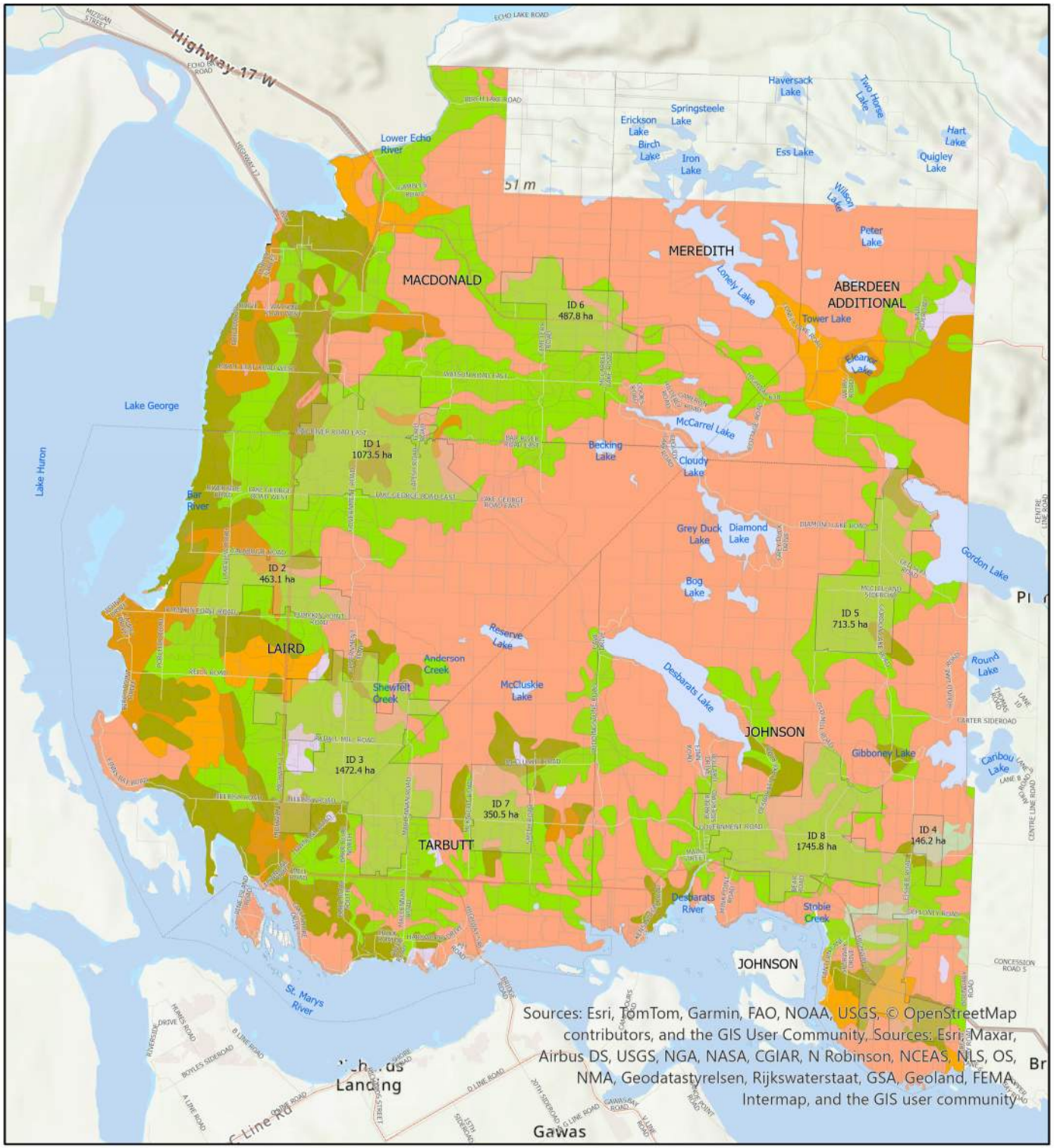
UTM Zone 17N
PCS: NAD 1983



DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY PLANNING BOARD REGION

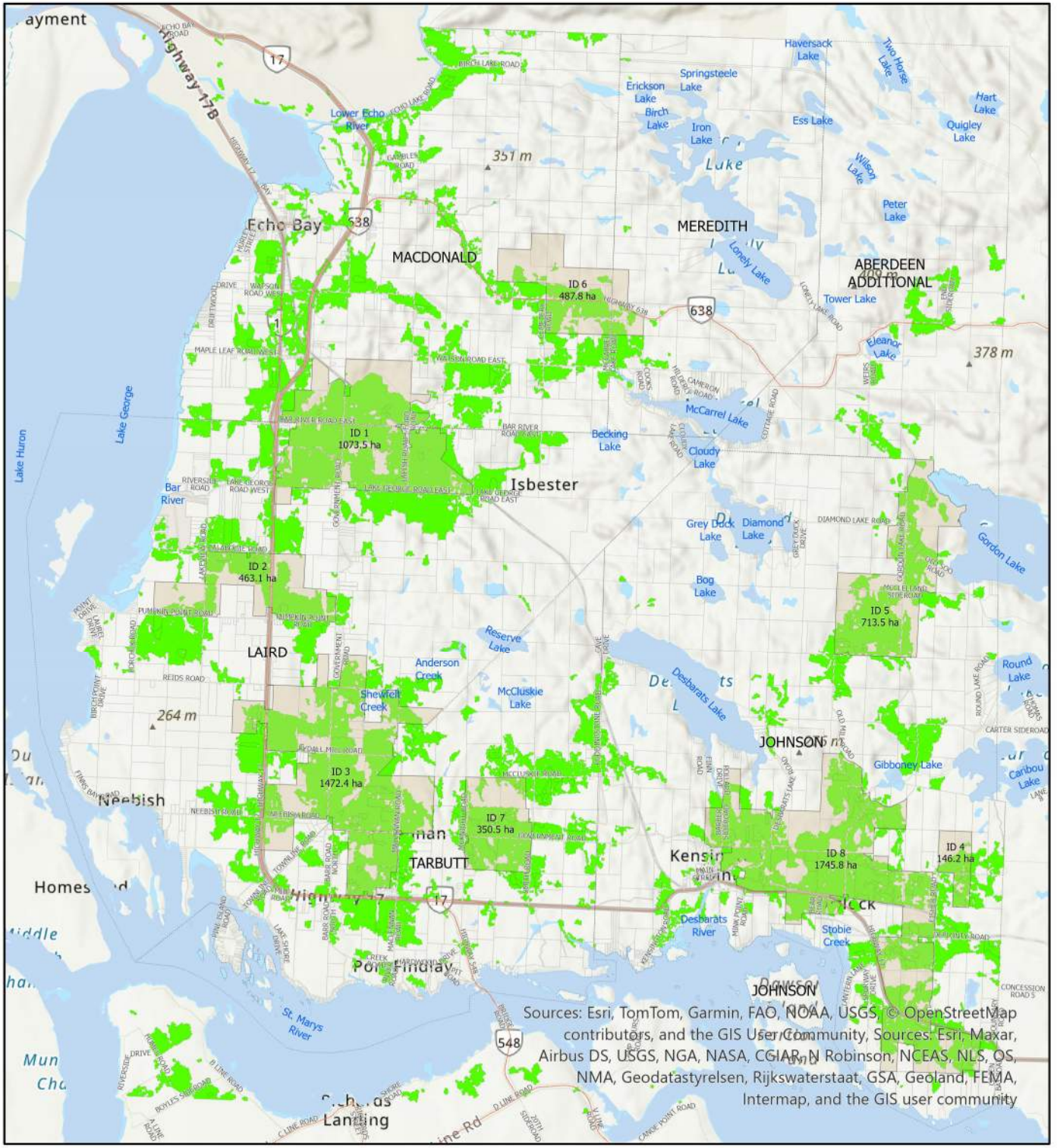
Figure 3: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Annual Crop Inventory Crop Areas

Legend

- Prime Agricultural Lands
- AAFC Annual Crop Inventory 2022

Roads

- Highway
- Other Roads



Spatial Reference
Name: NAD 1983
UTM Zone 17N
PCS: NAD 1983

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Sources: Esri, Maxar, Airbus DS, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatastyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap, and the GIS user community

DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 4: Land Evaluation and Area Review

Land Evaluation (LE) Factor 1 Score (60 points)

Legend

Roads

- Highway
- Other Roads

Factor 1 Score

- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60

N

0 1 2 4 6 8

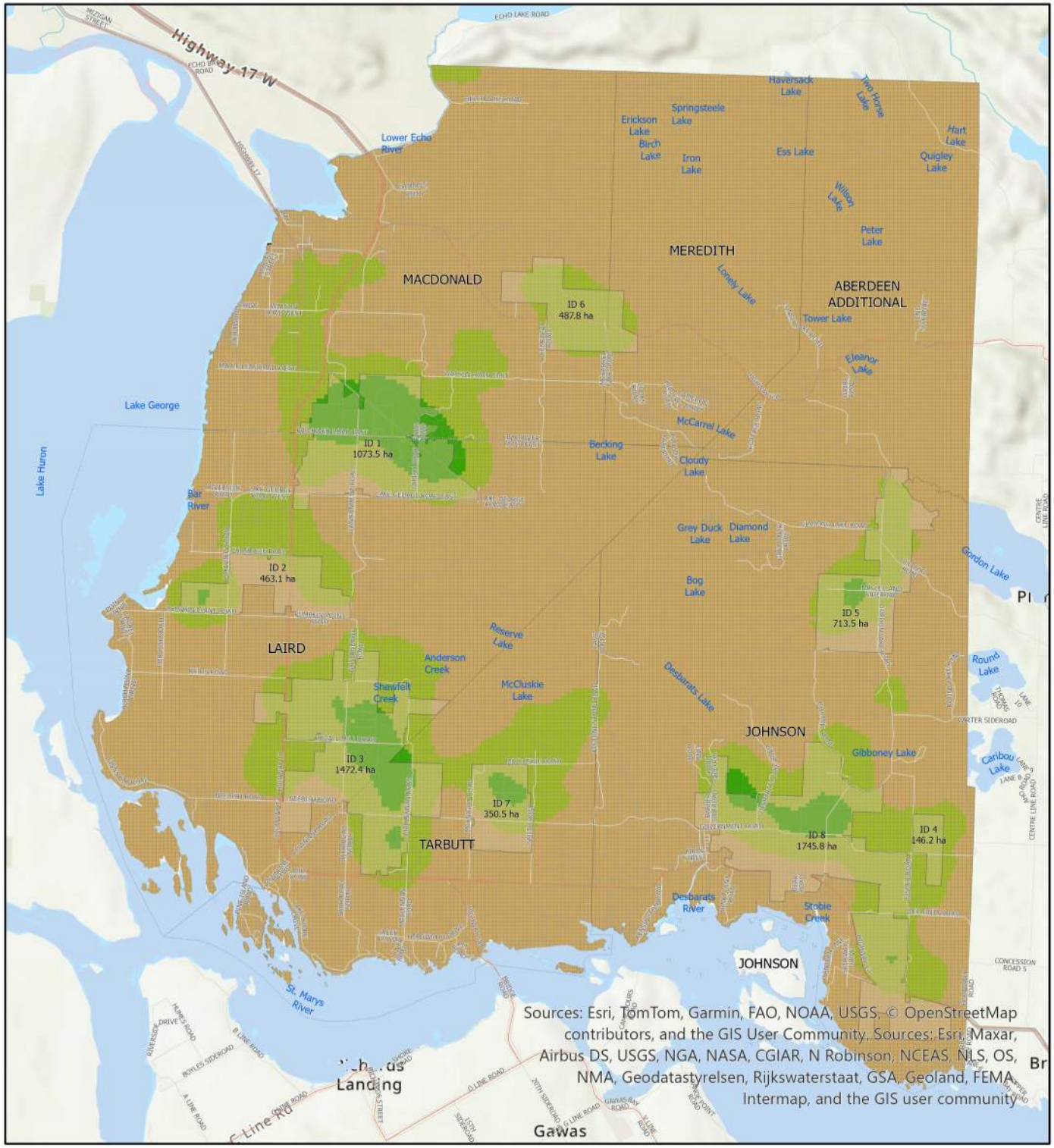
Kilometers

Spatial Reference
Name: NAD 1983
UTM Zone 17N
PCS: NAD 1983

DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 5: Land Evaluation and Area Review

Area Review (AR) Factor 2 Score (30 points)



Legend

- Prime Agricultural Lands

Roads

- Highway
- Other Roads

Factor 2 Score

- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30

N

0 1 2 4 6 8

Kilometers

Spatial Reference
Name: NAD 1983
UTM Zone 17N
PCS: NAD 1983

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Sources: Esri, Maxar, Airbus DS, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatastyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap, and the GIS user community

DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY
PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 6: Land Evaluation and Area Review

Area Review (AR) Factor 3 Score (10 points)

Legend

Roads

- Highway
- Other Roads

Factor 3

- 1-3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

N

0 1 2 4 6 8

Kilometers

Spatial Reference
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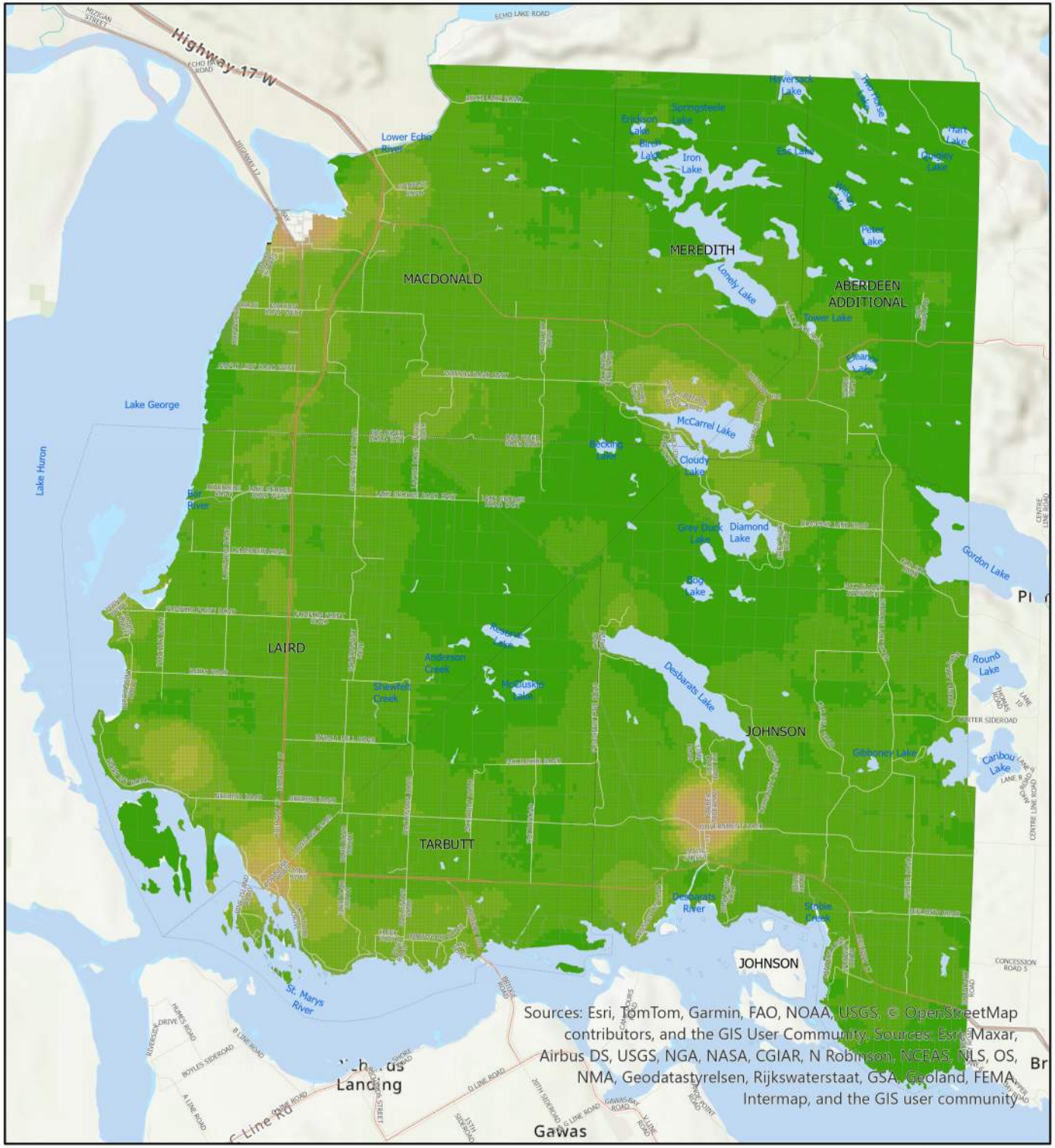
UTM Zone 17N
PCS: NAD 1983



DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY
PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 7: Land Evaluation and Area Review

LEAR Study Total Score (100 points)

Legend

Prime Agricultural Lands

Roads

Highway

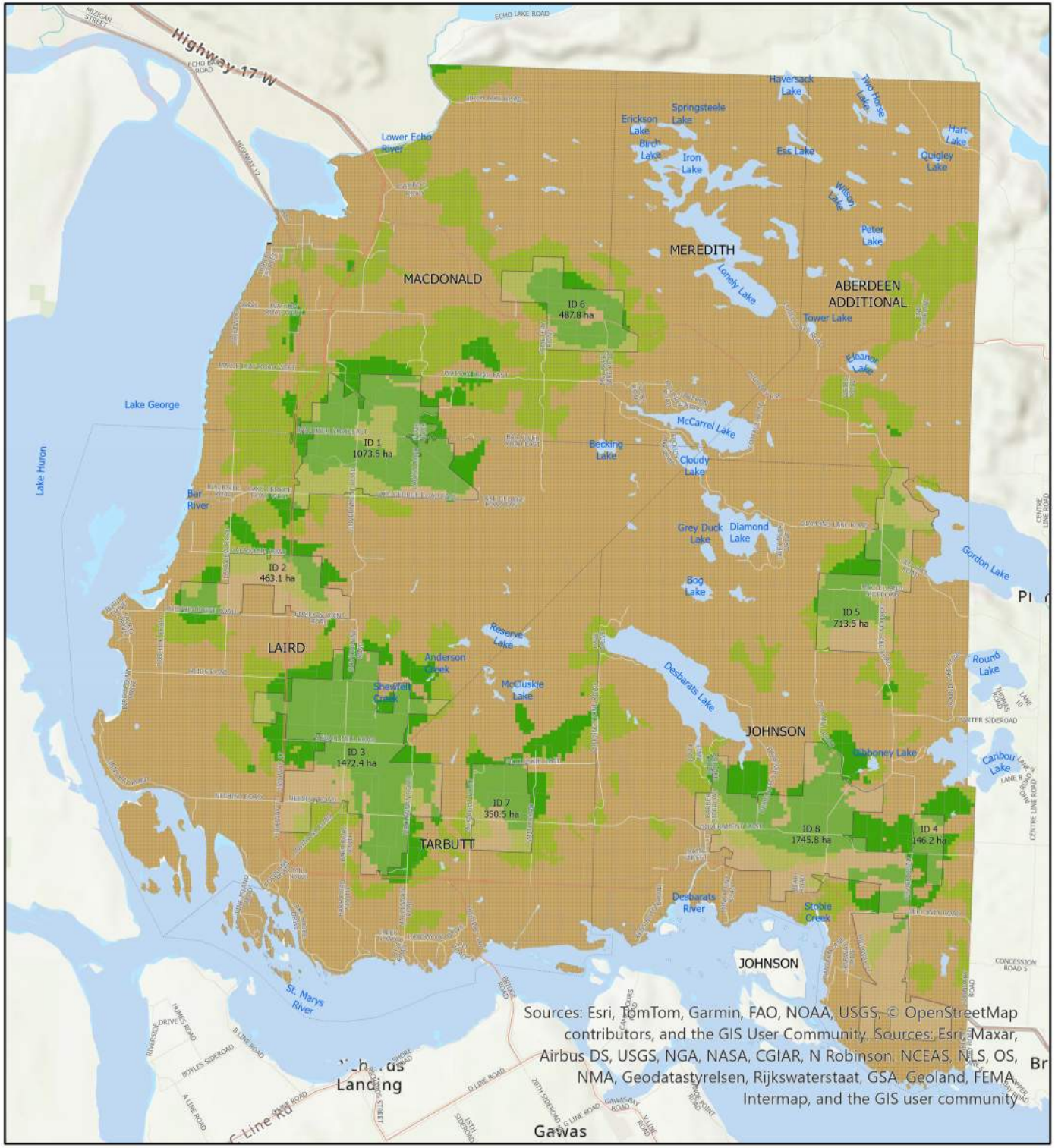
Other Roads

LEAR Study Total Score

0-59 Low Potential

60-69 Medium Potential

70-100 High Potential



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community. Sources: Esri, Maxar, Airbus DS, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatastyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap, and the GIS user community

N

0 1 2 4 6 8

Kilometers

Spatial Reference
Name: NAD 1983
UTM Zone 17N
PCS: NAD 1983

DESBARATS TO ECHO BAY
PLANNING BOARD REGION

Figure 8: Land Evaluation and Area Review

Agricultural Boundary with
LEAR Study Total Score (100 points)

Legend

Prime Agricultural Lands

Roads

Highway

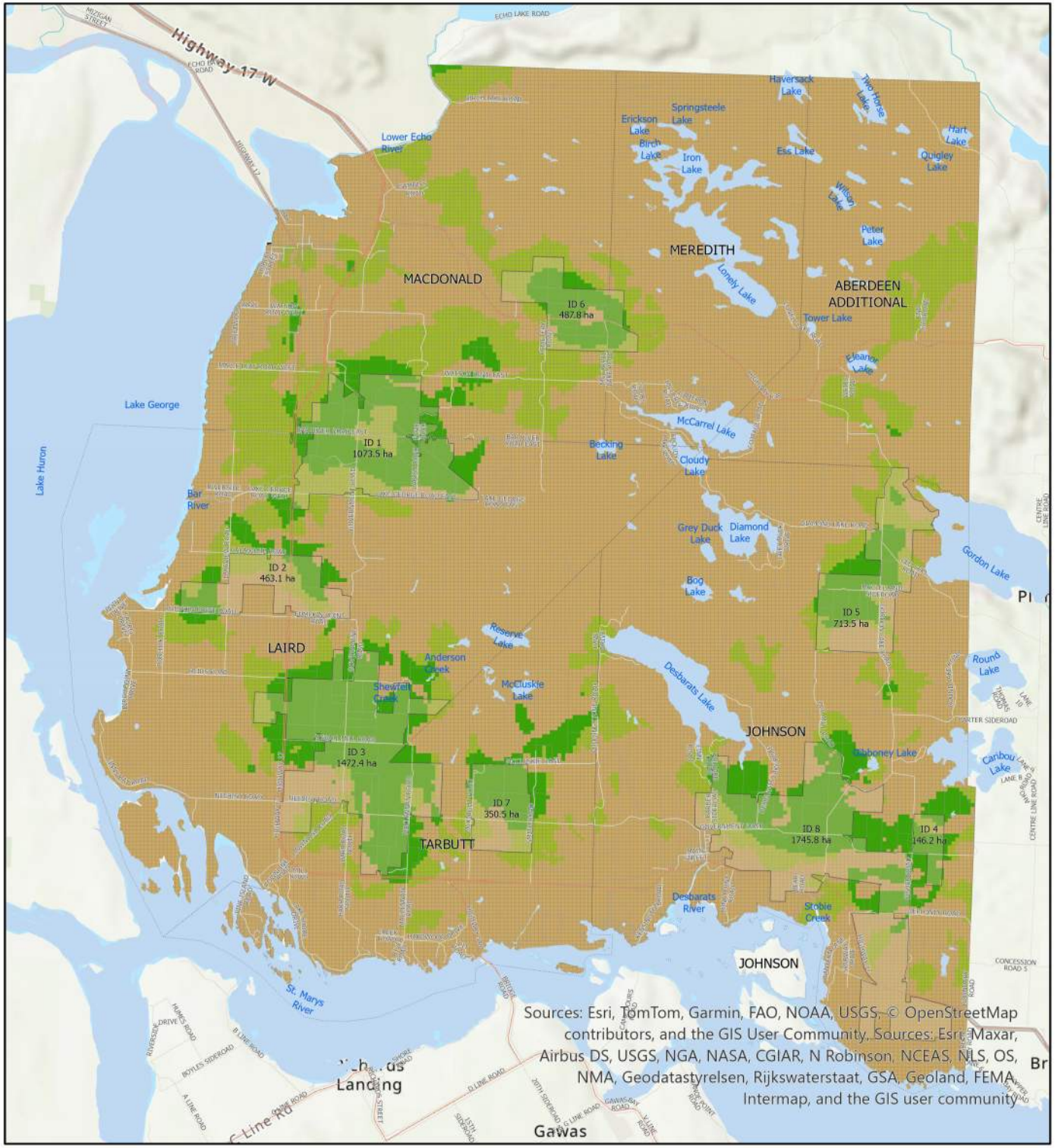
Other Roads

LEAR Study Total Score

0-59 Low Potential

60-69 Medium Potential

70-100 High Potential



N

0 1 2 4 6 8

Kilometers

Spatial Reference
Name: NAD 1983
UTM Zone 17N
PCS: NAD 1983