

Background on Conservation Projects on the Carden Alvar

Over the past 12 years, thousands of acres of priority lands on the Carden Alvar have been protected by acquisition or conservation easements, as shown in green on the attached map. Cameron Ranch and Windmill Ranch now form Carden Alvar Provincial Park; other conservation lands and easements are held by Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Couchiching Conservancy (CC).

A detailed Natural Area Conservation Plan, developed by NCC with input and endorsement by CC, sets out priorities for further work. Several ecological features and functions underlie these priorities:

- **Alvar communities** (purple blobs on the map show the highest-quality sites) are globally endangered ecological communities based on flat limestone bedrock. They are very vulnerable to damage from disturbance to their shallow soils or to loss to quarrying.
- **Grassland birds** occur in abundance in the southern parts of the project area (roughly from Cedarhurst Ranch south), where they nest in the permanent pastures and scattered hayfields. Most species of grassland birds are declining rapidly in southern Ontario, largely because of habitat loss. They readily share their habitat with low-density grazing cattle and respond well to management measures such as periodic shrub removal.
- Carden Alvar provides habitat for over **30 species at risk**, including grassland birds such as Loggerhead Shrike, Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark, as well as Blanding's Turtles and other reptiles, and a scattering of other species such as Butternut and American Ginseng. Because many of the species at risk habitats overlap, conserving Carden Alvar provides multiple benefits on a relatively small land base.
- As the consequences of climate change become more pressing, the importance of natural connectivity within the landscape is more evident. **Our long-term goal** for the Carden Alvar is to create and strengthen a broad **north-south corridor** to allow species movement for both wide-ranging mammals and a wide range of species adapting to a warming climate. This corridor will build on the properties already secured and connect to the QE II Wildlands Provincial Park to the north.

Both CC and NCC are deeply committed to completing this corridor of protected lands to provide permanent protection for the range of ecological values in this unusual landscape. Because we operate on a "**willing seller**" basis and are restricted by our charitable status to paying no more than fair market value for land, that process will be lengthy.

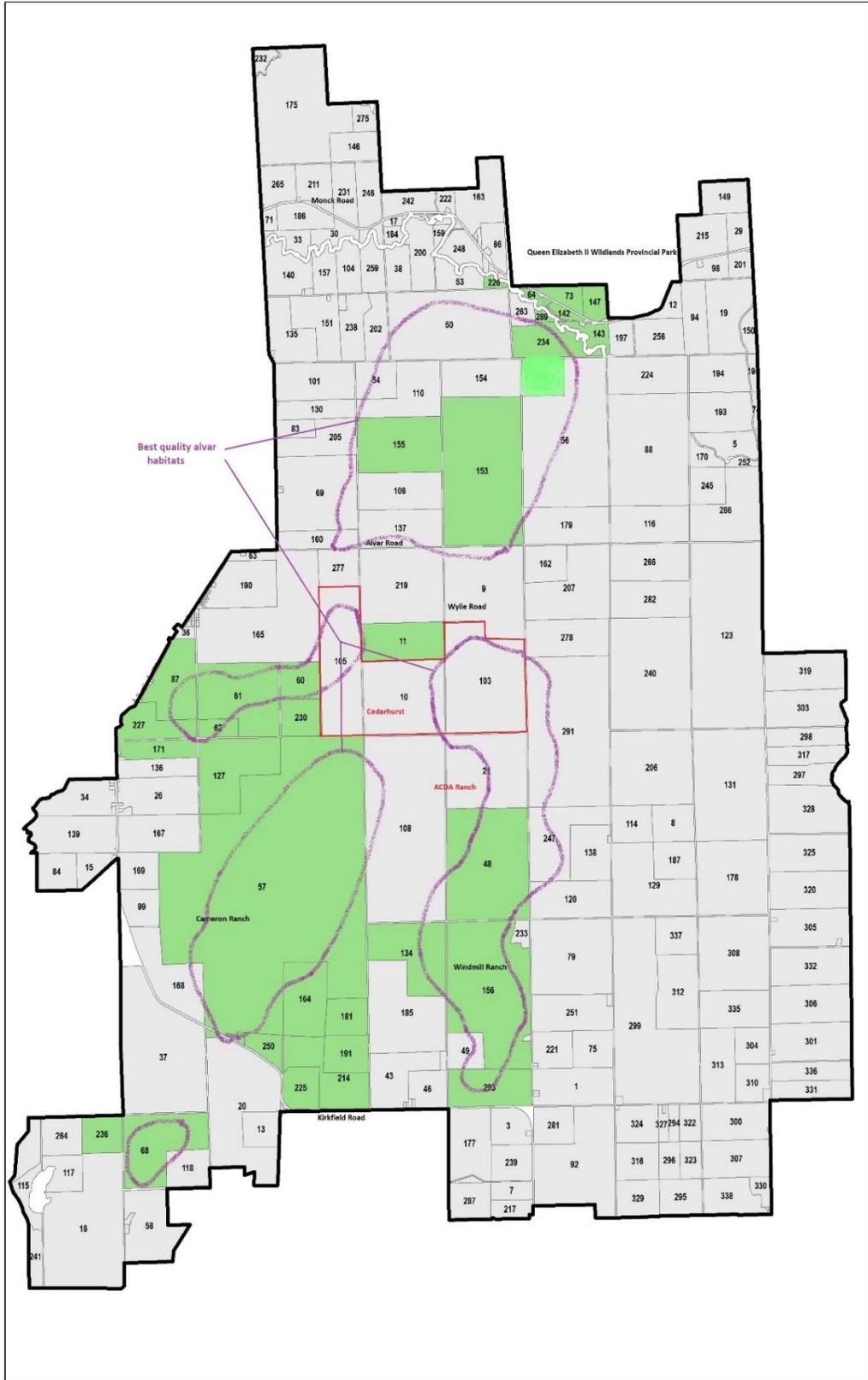


Figure 1: Existing conservation lands and alvars in the Carden area

The Premiere Shooting Centre proposal

The proponents of this project are seeking to purchase the 1350-acre Cedarhurst property (outlined in red on the map) in the heart of the Carden Alvar, and to construct:

- a 4000 sq.ft. clubhouse
- a small retail area and café
- a campground
- a rifle range 1.0 km in length with 18-ft high berms along its sides, plus several shorter ranges
- a skeet shooting area for shotguns
- a target area for handguns, and
- a “five-story building” for simulated commando-type “raids”.

The majority of this development would take place near the northern end of the central ridge on the property, with the shooting range oriented southwestwards towards the corner of Cameron Ranch.

The Centre will be open year-round, and will feature frequent shooting competitions and training courses on weekends.

An overview of the proposal can be found on-line at www.premiershootingcenter.com; a 3-minute promotional video located at the lower right on this homepage will give you a quick introduction. A series of short videos with more detail are available at www.facebook.com/1KmRange/videos.

There are several potential concerns that should be considered if this project were to be allowed to proceed in this location:

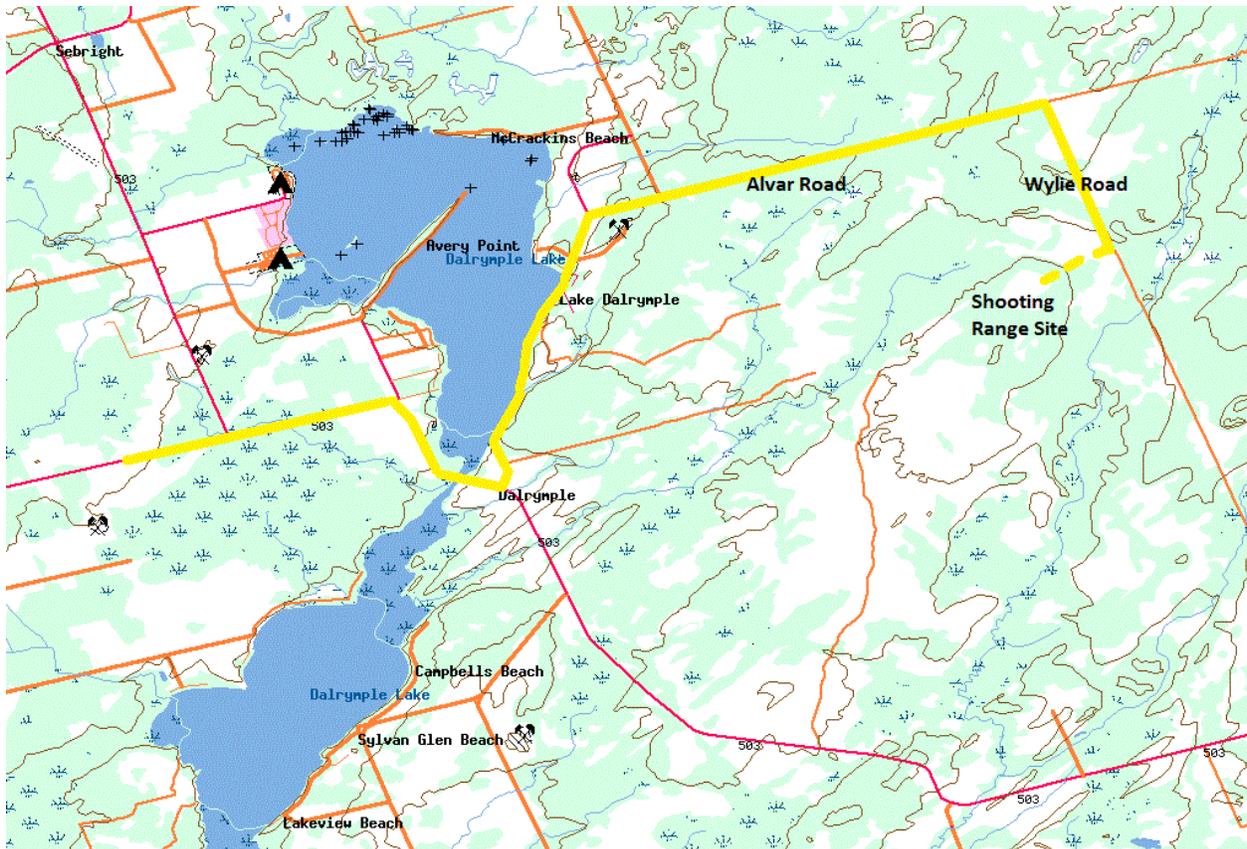
- The buildings, shooting ranges, campground and access roads on the property will create a considerable amount of site disturbance within a **sensitive alvar environment**, damaging an ecosystem that has been widely recognized as globally significant.

Because of the fractured nature of shallow bedrock, this site is an area of **high groundwater recharge**, and very sensitive to contamination. Large-scale importation of fill is estimated at **5000 truckloads** or more. Without the rigorous independent oversight and monitoring of the fill for contamination, this groundwater could be at risk. Currently, the City of Kawartha Lakes has no such safeguards.

- Despite the proposed berms, this kind of facility will have a serious level of **noise disturbance**, particularly in a remote and quiet location that is Cedarhurst Ranch. This noise is likely to disturb wildlife in the area, and to conflict with the rights of neighbours and visitors to a quiet environment.
- Access to the site will be routed along Lake Dalrymple Road north to Alvar Road, east to Wylie Road, and south to the site entrance. This will create **greatly increased traffic** along these roads, including through the Lake Dalrymple community, and require the widening and re-building of 6 km of Alvar and Wylie roads to year-round municipal standards.

- The proposed facility will introduce considerable numbers of **restricted weapons**, both long-guns and handguns, into the community.
- This proposal is very much at odds with our vision for the Carden Alvar, as a **quiet, well-protected landscape** safeguarded for the benefit of future generations and wildlife.

Proposed Access Route to Premier Shooting Centre



Municipal and Other Approval Requirements:

The City of Kawartha Lakes is the primary approval body for this proposal. After several confidential pre-consultation meetings with City staff, the proponents have been given a list of required studies and reports (such as an Environmental Impact Study, noise study, etc.) to be submitted as part of their application for:

- An **Official Plan Amendment**, since the current Rural designation in the 2016 Council-approved Official Plan does not allow shooting ranges; presumably the application will be for a change to something like Commercial Recreation, but that is uncertain at this point.
- A **rezoning** from the current Rural zone to some other designation, unknown at this point.

- **Site Plan approval**, which deals with more detailed matters such as the placement of buildings and roadways, landscaping, sewage facilities, and so on. While the City does have a fill by-law (currently under review), any controls on **fill placement and quality** in this case would be through the site plan approval conditions.
- Some form of **Roads Agreement** will have to be negotiated with the City to specify the nature and timing of road upgrades along the site access route, and to determine who pays for road construction and on-going maintenance.

The proposed site for the shooting centre straddles the divide between the Talbot River watershed, which drains into Lake Simcoe, and the Lake Dalrymple watershed, which drains through the Black River system. Kawartha Conservation and possibly Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority will be providing technical comments on the proposal, but **neither have permitting authority** in this area.

Any approvals for this project must **conform** with Provincial planning policies, including the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan on parts of the site, and most importantly, the **Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan** approved by the Provincial government in 2017. This plan recognizes alvars as significant ecological features, and the Carden Alvar is included within the provincially-mapped **Natural Heritage System** for the Greater Golden Horseshoe which was approved in February 2018.

Finally, the Premier Shooting Centre proposal will require approval by the RCMP Chief Firearms Officer for Ontario, particularly with regard to **the Range Design and Construction Guidelines** which set out safety requirements.

Updated May 17, 2018.