

Nith Valley EcoBoosters – History & Terms of Reference (version 2.7) – May 2021

Mandate	<p>The Nith Valley EcoBoosters is a not-for-profit, politically non-partisan volunteer group committed to achieving and supporting a long-term healthy environment in Wilmot and Wellesley Townships through education, action and collaboration.</p> <p><i>Politically non-partisan</i> means that the Nith Valley EcoBoosters does not endorse or support specific political parties, politicians or candidates. This does not preclude NVEB from engaging in education and/or advocacy directed toward political or other issues related to the environment.</p>
Contact Information	<p>Website: nvecoboosters.com E-mail: nvecoboosters@gmail.com Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Nith-Valley-EcoBoosters-106180851258463/</p>
Date Established	<p>The group was first formed in 2013 as an ad hoc committee at Zion United Church in New Hamburg. The Nith Valley EcoBoosters became a community based group and adopted its current name on June 24, 2015.</p>
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nith Valley EcoBoosters usually meet on the 4th Wednesday of most months. • Monthly meetings are open to all interested individuals. • Sub-committees and working groups may be established for various topics, issues or proposals as required. These groups may meet at any time and are in addition to the regular monthly meetings.
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chairperson, Treasurer, Recording Secretary and Communications Officer positions provide leadership to the group ensuring that it functions properly and that effective decisions are made and carried out. Each position is normally for a 6 month period after which a review takes place and other members may volunteer to take over any role. • No membership fees are collected. Nith Valley EcoBoosters is funded by donations, fundraising efforts, and grants.
Liaison & Activities	<p>The Nith Valley EcoBoosters liaise with various groups and have completed or are currently involved in a variety of activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The original Zion United Church EcoBoosters group worked with Divest Waterloo in April 2015 to show the film “Do The Math” followed by a discussion, led by a member of Divest Waterloo. That public event in New Hamburg led to the formation of our current group. • Worked with the Waterloo Region Blue Dot committee in the summers of both 2015 and 2016 to promote the David Suzuki Foundation’s Blue Dot Movement. This included a presentation to the Wilmot Township Council on August

31, 2015 to present the case for the township to sign on to a declaration recognizing the right to a healthy environment. We continue to maintain a connection with the Waterloo Region Blue Dot Team.

- Participated in a planning committee spearheaded by **Divest Waterloo** that organized a climate march in Waterloo in the fall of 2015.
- Assisted teachers and students to plant native plants in the outdoor garden area at **Forest Glen Public School** (Fall 2015). This was part of the school's "Greening the Glen" project.
- Participated in the 2016 **Living Well Festival** at the Wilmot Recreation Complex (April 2016).
- Initiated an idling reduction campaign with the "Eco Team" teachers and students at **Forest Glen Public School** (Fall 2016).
- Provided idling reduction materials from "Dads Against Dirty Air" to **Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School**. The school confirmed that they used some of the materials (Fall 2016).
- Participated in the **Waterloo Region Zero Waste Challenge** (October 2016).
- Supported the **Wilmot Healthy Communities Coalition** by having representation on that committee for 3 years.
- Partnered with **Climate Action Waterloo Region** to further the goals of both organizations. Our first joint event was participation in the 2017 **Living Well Festival**.
- Created an **Eco Water Board Game** in 2017 that was designed to help educate children and adults about water conservation/using water wisely. It has been used at Forest Glen School (April 2017), the 2017 Living Well Festival, at an event organized by the Waterloo Region Blue Dot Team (June 2017), and at Groh Public School (April 2019).
- Participated in **Community Cleanup Days** in Baden (2017) and New Hamburg (2018 & 2019).
- Began publishing "**EcoNuggets**" (tips for helping the environment) in the monthly Baden Outlook newsletter starting in January 2018.
- Held our first environmental film night on March 21, 2018, in partnership with the Region of Waterloo library, which featured the film "**Beyond Crisis.**" Approximately 90 people gathered at the Wilmot Recreation Complex to see the film and be part of a follow up discussion with the film's creator, Kai Reimer-Watts. This event was funded by a Municipal grant from the **Township of Wilmot**.
- Collaborated with other groups to host an all candidates meeting in May 2018 prior to the provincial election and again in early 2019 to respond to proposed provincial legislation that posed threats to the environment.
- Responds to requests for speakers for church groups and other organizations (e.g. the **New Hamburg Board of Trade** and **Rotary Wilmot**) to increase awareness of environmental issues and ways to take positive actions in our homes and communities.
- Planned and executed a water conservation/preservation themed afternoon for the **Wilmot Family Resource Summer Nature Camp** for kids in August 2018 and 2019.
- Partnered with the Zion United Church UCW to host an event at the church on November 6, 2018 where Dr. Blair Feltmate from the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo did a presentation to about 100

people called **“Warmer, Wetter and Wilder: What Homeowners and Communities Can Expect under a Changing Climate, and How They Can Prepare.”** The focus of the presentation was on addressing practical and cost-effective steps that homeowners can take to lower their home flood risk profile. We solicited funds from local businesses to help with the costs of this event.

- Began the process of identifying how **home flood risk reduction ideas and strategies** can be effectively converted into action in our townships in November 2018. This is an ongoing collaboration with Sheila Walker (owner, Home Hardware store, New Hamburg), Cheryl Evans (Director, Home Flood Protection Program, Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, University of Waterloo), and Angie Hallman (Wilmot Township Councillor).
- Organized a film night on March 20, 2019, where approximately 80 people gathered at Zion United Church for a food waste event which included the film **“Just Eat It”** followed by a panel discussion. Our panelists were Jennifer Pfenning, director of marketing and human resources for Pfenning's Organic Farms; Dr. Alison Blay-Palmer, Director of the Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at the Balsillie School for International Affairs, Wilfrid Laurier University; and Dr. Mike von Massow, Ontario Agriculture College Chair in Food System Leadership at the University of Guelph. This event was funded by a Municipal grant from the **Township of Wilmot**.
- With support from **GreenPAC** and the **“100 Debates on the Environment”** project, hosted an environmental federal election debate on October 9th, 2019. Approximately 130 people attended this event at the New Dundee Community Centre. The purpose of the debate was to make the environment an election issue that no party and no candidate could ignore.
- Collaborated with **Wilmot Horticultural Society, Rotary Wilmot**, and the **Township of Wilmot** to begin the **Let's Tree Wilmot** initiative. Its mission is to increase the tree canopy cover in the rural and urban areas of Wilmot. An initial meeting of interested individuals and groups took place on March 11, 2020.
- Supported the group **Citizens for Safe Groundwater** who were opposing the approval of a gravel pit in our community. To support their position, we submitted a letter to the Township of Wilmot In March 2020 and delegated at a Township of Wilmot Council meeting in May 2021.
- Signed a letter (along with 111 other organizations) that was sent to the **Government of Ontario** in April 2020 requesting that it retain the current mandate of the province's 36 Conservation Authorities in protecting, restoring, and managing the watersheds where 95 percent of Ontarians reside.
- Became members of **Ontario Nature's Nature Network** in June 2020. Ontario Nature is working hard on many aspects of provincial conservation including *Southern Ontario Woodlands, Parks and Protected Areas, Smart Growth and Urban Sprawl, Wildlife Conservation and Research, and Community Conservation*. As a Nature Network member, we have a unique chance to learn first-hand from Ontario Nature staff about conservation issues!
- Endorsed a letter that opposes the Ontario Government's proposal to remove the prohibition on **aggregate extraction** in the habitat of threatened and endangered species in the regional Natural Heritage System of the Greater Golden Horseshoe (July 2020). We also endorsed an Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) submission that opposes the Ontario Government's proposed changes to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area.

- Joined the **Future Ground Network (FGN)** in September 2020. FGN is a hub of groups taking action in their communities to secure healthier, more viable futures in the areas of climate justice, biodiversity, waste reduction and sustainable systems. Joining the network means connecting with organizers from other groups to share best practices, find inspiration and work together to achieve common goals. By joining FGN, we have gained access to free training, educational events, and the use of digital tools like Zoom Meeting and Zoom Webinar.
- Organized an online webinar entitled: **Droughts & Downpours** on October 14, 2020. This webinar focused on small changes individuals can make that collectively make big impacts when managing our properties and community spaces as we experience more severe weather events. It offered a unique opportunity to learn practical tips that can mitigate local problems due to climate change, particularly related to recurring droughts & downpours. 103 registrations were received for this webinar which was funded by a Municipal grant from the **Township of Wilmot**.
- Assisted with the organization of **Let's Tree Wilmot's** first tree planting event on October 24, 2020. 100 trees were planted at William Scott Park in New Hamburg.
- Sent a letter to **Mike Harris**, MPP Kitchener-Conestoga, in November 2020 to **request that he oppose and urge the removal of Schedule 6 in Bill 229, the proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act** which would undermine efforts to conserve biodiversity and build resilience to climate change impacts. We also urged Mr. Harris to support proposals to protect more farmland, natural areas and freshwater sources.
- Sent a letter to the **Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing** in December 2020 in support of the Township of Wilmot's application to implement a **sanitary backwater valve program** for residences and businesses located in the floodplain in New Hamburg. We applaud the Township for taking these steps to mitigate the effects of flooding.
- Responded in December 2020 to a posting on the Environmental Registry of Ontario by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, indicating that we have concerns about and do not support the proposed **Species at Risk Conservation Fund**. Instead of completing beneficial actions for species impacted by the destruction of their habitats, proponents will have the option of going ahead with harmful activities as soon as they pay into the fund. Once they pay, they can wash their hands of responsibility for the harm they cause. We do not support the government's plan to proceed with implementing the Fund. It will lead to an increase in habitat loss and degradation.
- In partnership with the **Wilmot Horticultural Society**, organized an online webinar entitled: **Let's Talk Native Plants** on January 11, 2021. The webinar provided information about the strengths and benefits of the many plants discussed. Pros and cons were offered for many varieties. Some native plants contribute to the ornamental beauty of a garden, others add drought tolerance or provide support for birds and/or pollinators. 646 people registered for this webinar.
- Endorsed a submission in January 2021 from Ontario Nature to the Ontario Government regarding the government's consultation on **Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs)**. MZOs allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to directly zone land for particular purposes without public notice or consultation or the right to

	<p>appeal. There has been a sharp increase in the use of MZOs over the past year, opening the door to controversial developments on agricultural lands and significant natural areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsed a paper prepared by Ontario Nature in January 2021 that outlines what steps are needed and what principles should guide the Greenbelt expansion proposed by the Ontario Government. • Organized an online webinar entitled: Let’s Talk EVs - Are You Ready For An Electric Vehicle? on February 18, 2021. This webinar discussed a number of factors to take into account when deciding whether to purchase an EV including financial, environmental, plus travel and cargo usability considerations. 203 people registered for this webinar. • Endorsed a letter drafted by Ontario Nature and Environmental Defence to the Attorney General in March 2021 asking that Schedule 3 be removed from Bill 257. Schedule 3 proposed amendment of the Planning Act so that both existing and future Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs) could lawfully override protections for significant wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitat and other natural heritage features. • Endorsed a submission from Ontario Nature in April 2021 to the Ontario Government providing insights and recommendations on how to grow and enhance the quality of the Greenbelt and thereby better protect the vital benefits provided by farmland, water resources and natural areas within the Greater Golden Horseshoe. • Organized an online webinar entitled: Let’s Talk Plastics – A Family Event on April 22, 2021. This family-focused webinar discussed the problems with plastic pollution as it continues to fill up landfills. The event included participation by a local youth climate advocate; posters and short pre-recorded audio & video messages about the problems with plastic from young students (Grade One and older): and a presentation about what does and does not belong in our recycling blue boxes in the Region of Waterloo. 102 people registered for this webinar. • Collaborated with 50 x 30 Waterloo Region to host an Environmental Townhall event on May 19, 2021 that focused on Rural Economic Development Through Green Innovation. 90 people registered for this event.
<p>Future Events:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Let’s Talk Trees” webinar – September 2021. • “Let’s Talk Plastics – Part Two” – November, 2021