

1.0 Site Naming and Signage

Version 1, December 2000

1.1 SITE NAMING

NCC uses a property-naming convention to identify each property secured and to identify the natural area of which the property is part. Naming works on two levels, one the **Natural Area Name** and the other the specific **Property Name**. The naming convention is important for two purposes; internal NCC use, and external signage and recognition.

A. Internal NCC Use

Every property is assigned a **Property Name** for the purposes of project approvals and tracking (see **Part IIID Site Registry**). A more general Natural Area name is also considered at the same time as project approvals, for later use in signage, recognition, fundraising, etc. The initial Property Name does not need to be the same name later used in external signage or recognition.

B. External Signage and Recognition

The **Natural Area Name** is the name most importantly associated with a site. The names of these natural areas are at the discretion of the Regional Director but should reflect existing and/or historic names (e.g., Cavan Bog, Old Man on His Back). Local terms and names should be used wherever possible. If no name is already given to the Natural Area, a new name should be created, normally comprised of two parts:

- ◆ a historical or local place name nearby e.g., Cowichan, Stone Road, Soda Lake
- ◆ a key natural feature at the site e.g., Garry Oak, Alvar, Parkland

The additional term “Natural Area” (or “Preserve” or “Reserve”, or French equivalent) is used on signage to indicate its status as a Nature Conservancy protected area. A Natural Area Name may be named after a person or family for a donation of land or funds but an effort should be made to explain to a donor requesting such a commemorative naming that there are positive, long-term benefits to a community and a site in having a Natural Area Name associated with it. Such requests need to be reviewed by the National Director of Stewardship or Executive Director.

A Property Name is a more specific name that is associated with a former owner, or donor or commemorative need. It is not mandatory to have a Property Name on external signage, etc., unless a donor or commemorative need is being addressed. However, where there is such a need, it is general NCC convention to attach specific owner/donor names to Properties rather than to Natural Areas. It is recommended that wording such as the “Smith Tract” be used in such circumstances (e.g., Soda Lake Parkland, Smith Tract).



1.2 SIGNAGE

Purpose

There are various purposes for signs at NCC properties – to help protect the natural values at the site; to identify protected natural areas in which the Conservancy was involved; to provide recognition to our partners and donors who have contributed to the site securement; to promote our land protection efforts and raise public awareness of NCC’s role in the community; and to provide neighbours with contact information should a problem or concern arise on the property.

Process

It is preferred that all NCC-secured sites have signage or a plaque in place, whether they are small parcels or large flagship sites. Signage is a standard part of site securement and stewardship, and the type, location, and precise wording should be determined regionally in general conformity with these guidelines. NCC wishes to achieve consistent signage across Canada and a memorable national image.

Signage is a Regional responsibility, and signage will be considered in the stewardship plans of individual sites. Using the NCC Site Database or other records, copies of all text materials at sites will be maintained for reference, replacement and insurance purposes.

Minimum Requirements

Signs should convey the name of the natural area and property tract (see below), as well as the Conservancy name and logo, our regional or national Toll-free number, and our conservation objective. Wording on our signs and property plaques should reflect not only the needs of the site but also the wishes of our donors and partners. Moreover, attention should be paid to the surrounding community’s need to understand the values of the site. This means that our signage may vary from property to property – both in terms of messages, and in terms of sign placement and materials. For instance, signage may take the form of signs or plaques according to donor wishes for lands on which NCC holds easements.

In certain communities, signs may attract negative attention and a management decision may be made to not sign a reserve any more than legally required. With regard to perimeter and activity signage, provincial legal standards will be understood and met (see below).

In general, wording should be kept to a minimum, and positive messages regarding activities are preferable to negative wording. NCC should consider bilingual signs for all properties – particularly in Quebec, Manitoba and the Atlantic provinces – to encourage understanding in both official languages.



1.3 TYPES OF SIGNS

Signs on NCC-Owned Properties

The purpose of site signage for NCC owned reserves is to identify the natural area as protected by NCC, to provide an identifying name to the natural area, to give an indication of the protection goal for the natural area, to recognize land donors and financial supporters, to identify stewards, and provide contact information and the date of protection. Basic signage information may be available at the time of site securement; other interpretative signage may be based on the subsequent management-planning process, which evaluates the sensitivity of the site, NCC's obligations under the particular province's occupier's liability act ("basic duty of care"), and the appropriate activities at the site.

In many cases, all of the above information may not be appropriate or possible on this type of sign. Some information may not be available at the time signage is developed, such as the site steward. Or, the land donors may make a request not to be noted on the sign if they are already acknowledged on a donor dedication plaque or if they wish to remain anonymous. Recognition of contributions by specific individuals or organizations should follow NCC's National Donor Recognition Program.

Partnership Signs

When a major partner or several partners invests to secure a site, signage will give appropriate recognition. For instance, a government partnership may result in the name of a Minister or MP being included on the sign, in which case NCC should try to see that the appropriate government department pay for the sign and that NCC get final say on the text. If the partner is another non-profit organization, then the order of mention should go to the largest financial contributor. Because recognition on signage is often part of the land securement negotiation, each project will require unique attention to partner and donor recognition on signs.

Donor/Partner Dedication Plaques

In addition or in place of property/site signs, plaques can be used to convey a dedication message or express gratitude for a generous donation that made the securement of land possible. Plaques must contain the NCC logo and the name of the site or individual.

Easement Signs

Signage for easement lands is optional and should be the landowner's decision. In some communities, landowners may not feel comfortable publicizing that they have protected their land through an agreement with a conservation organization. For easement donors, NCC may wish to offer a plaque or small sign to be mounted on the landowner's property to advise neighbours and the general public about the property's protective status, if the landowner so wishes the recognition.

Perimeters and Activity Signs

Boundary and activity signage is necessary to communicate to the public whether access on our properties is permitted or prohibited and also, what activities are permissible, and which ones are not (see management planning procedures). It is important that in developing perimeter signage, regions look to their provincial policies or laws governing trespass and evaluate NCC's responsibilities under the provincial occupier's acts.

Interpretive Signs

It may be important to mark trails or convey information to visitors to ensure the understanding and careful use of our natural areas. It is largely up to the discretion of Regional Directors or designate when to erect such signs. Wording should be positive, brief and accurate. Signs will include the NCC logo and contact information. An interpretive sign will add appropriate detail not included on the main site sign.

1.4 SITE RECOGNITION

If the project would not have happened without the co-operation and participation of certain individuals, then they can be recognized on the sign, except where donors and or partners ask to not be recognized. Requests from donors for additional recognition for plaques and stone cairns must be approved by Regional Directors or designate and could depend on sufficient stewardship funding, as these are often costly. Decisions about donor recognition should be made regionally and in accordance with our National Recognition Program, as contributions by donors will likely warrant different levels of recognition depending on the scale of the project.

1.5 PROPERTY CONSIDERATIONS

Depending on the access and viewing areas, multiple signages may be appropriate. For our "flagship" projects where the public is likely to be invited, we should ensure appropriate signage throughout the property. If there are a variety of access points, then there should be signage at each one. If there are natural points of stop or observation at a venue, it may be appropriate to have interpretive informational signs with the NCC name and logo.

If site visitors are welcome, NCC signs should be placed where passers-by can see them, such as at a roadside or where the site will be accessed. If visitors are not to be encouraged, placement of signage slightly away from a roadside should be considered. If visitors are to be discouraged, perimeter signage should be used at appropriate locations, especially past access point. There should also be signage that people can read as they exit a venue so that their last visible memory is of the NCC name. Plaques are less conspicuous and can be mounted on a rock or other permanent foundation.

1.6 COMMUNICATION AND APPROVAL

Regional land securement officers should communicate to Regional Director the wishes of the land donor or funding partner regarding the wording on signs or plaques (sign types 1-4 below). This general signage is part of land securement, and should be erected within one year of the land being secured, except where such signage may inhibit other NCC activities, and where owners/donors/partners do not wish signage. (Regions will develop plans to deal with their backlog of signage responsibilities on existing sites.)

It is the responsibility of Regional stewardship staff to see that perimeter, activity and interpretive signage (sign types 5-6 below) are in place following development of a site stewardship statement, or an interim site stewardship statement.

1.7 PHYSICAL FORMAT AND COSTS

Text other than the NCC logo should be in Arial or Times Roman. Font size will vary depending on quantity of text. The natural-area name and NCC logo should be the most prominent text, preferably in black. Other text should be in black. Type 1 and 2 signs (below) should measure up to 6' x 3', as appropriate for the situation, and be legible from a distance of 100' where possible. They should be supported by two 4" x 4" pressure-treated posts.

Signs and plaques will vary in cost depending on the size and materials (crezon/wood signs range from \$100 to \$400, whereas bronze plaques are more costly \$525-\$1300). Costs for main signs (sign types 1-4 below) should be part of land-securement costs, and those of other sign types (5-6 below) should generally come from funds raised for site stewardship. It is suggested that securement and stewardship staff request a contribution from the land donor to assist pay for signage.

1.8 SIGNAGE DETAILS

The following pages depict signage types, describing existing examples, recommended signage, and minimum components.

TYPE 1: SIGNS ON NCC-OWNED PROPERTIES

Use: Signs for NCC properties that are acquired through purchase or donation without support of a major funding partner, which may be managed by NCC or other partner.

Recommended Signage:



Minimum Components:

NCC logo

Natural Area name and Property name

Conservation goal (“for the benefit of nature, or “for conservation”)

Date of completion (e.g., “since 2001”)

Land steward (optional, if not NCC)

Toll-free number (national number, or customized by region)

(Wording should be concise and minimalist, and should not date the sign unnecessarily.)

Materials:

A variety of signs are available. Depending on the site, metal, enamel, crezon (treated wood), or vinyl signage should be considered, taking into account weathering and damage caused by vandalism. Signs covered and protected with lexan have increased longevity.

Lettering, Sign Dimensions and Colour:

Text other than NCC logo should be Arial or Times Roman. Font size will vary depending on quantity of text. The site name and NCC logo should be most prominent. Signs should measure up to 6’ x 3’ and should be supported by two 4” x 4” pressure-treated posts. Where NCC does not want to attract visitors to our (non-flagship) sites, smaller signs should be designed. Signs should use black lettering, and be legible from a distance of at least 100’.

(N.B. Natural Area can be Nature Reserve, or Preserve, or French equivalent.)

TYPE 2: PARTNERSHIP SIGNS

Use: Signs for NCC projects that have been made possible by a major contribution of a corporation/government agency. Partnership signs may differ from this because of the signage standards of partners, but the following model should be followed to the degree possible.

Recommended Signage



Minimum Components:

- NCC logo
- Natural Area name and Property (donor/partner) name
- Conservation goal (“for the benefit of nature”, or “for conservation”)
- Date of completion (e.g., “since 2001”)
- Statement of recognition
- Land steward (optional, if not NCC)
- Toll-free number (national number, or customized by region)

Materials:

A variety of signs are available. Depending on the site, metal, enamel, crezon (treated wood), or vinyl signage should be considered, taking into account weathering and damage caused by vandalism. Signs covered and protected with lexan have increased longevity.

Lettering, Sign Dimensions and Colour

Text other than NCC logo should be Arial or Times Roman. Font size will vary depending on quantity of text. If the partner is another non-profit organization, then the partners should be listed in order of greatest financial contribution input to the project. For instance, if DU contributed 75% and NCC contributed 25%, then DU should be first. When NCC is the lead partner, it should be the first name. Font sizes and logo sizes for partners should be more or less equivalent, or smaller for partners whose contribution is less. Signs should measure up to 6’ x 3’ and should be supported by two 4” x 4” pressure-treated posts. Signs should use black lettering, and be legible from a distance of at least 100’.

TYPE 3: DONOR/PARTNER DEDICATION PLAQUES

Use: Plaques can be used in addition to or in place of site signs to recognize a donor's contribution to a project. Plaques can convey a dedication message or express gratitude for a generous donation that made the securement of land possible.

Recommended Plaque Signage:



Minimum Components:

- NCC logo
- Natural Area name and Property Name
- Conservation goal (“for the benefit of nature”, or “for conservation”)
- Donor/partner name
- Date of securement
- Land steward (optional, if not NCC)

Materials

Bronze plaques are recommended as the most durable, permanent material to recognize the nature reserve donor, or significant contributor. They should be mounted on a rock or secure cement foundation (costly as well) to prevent theft.

Lettering, Plaque Dimensions and Colours

Text other than NCC logo should be in Times New Roman font and text size will vary depending on text quantity. Size of plaques can be left up to the discretion of stewardship staff, according to amount of text and recognition desired (plaques may measure anywhere from 12”x12” to 20” by 30”). Bronze plaques should have blackened text to make them easier to read.

(N.B. Natural Area can be Nature Reserve, or Preserve, or French equivalent.)

TYPE 4: EASEMENT SIGNS

Use: Sign to recognize a landowner's interest in conservation through an easement or covenant on their property.

Recommended Signage:



Minimum Components to Suggest to Landowner:

Conservation easements signs should only be erected at the request or agreement of the landowner, and should preferably be given the landowner to do with as they see fit. Wording should be simple and standardized, and will not suggest that the area is publicly accessible or a nature reserve. NCC staff should discuss with the donor their wishes regarding signage and the possibility of the following appearing on the sign:

NCC name and logo

Simple notification of existence of easement/covenant

Materials

A variety of signs are available, although a regionally standard metal sign no larger than 11" X 17" would be desirable, compatible with other rural commemorative signage.

Lettering, Sign Dimensions and Colours

Text other than NCC logo should be in Arial or Times Roman. Font size will vary depending on quantity of text. Preferably, signs should be standardized metal signs that landowners can affix to access or perimeter location, or otherwise mount. Size should be in the order of 11" X 17" maximum, comparable to other rural commemorative plaques.

Signs should use black lettering, and be legible from a distance.



TYPE 5: PERIMETER AND ACTIVITY SIGNS

Use: As landowners, NCC must have clear control over the entry and use of our properties by the general public. Signs on the perimeter of properties can prevent illegal or inadvertent access and activities on sites where access or activities may compromise the protection goals of the site. We must ensure appropriate signage is posted to communicate to the public whether access to our sites is permitted or prohibited.

Perimeter Signage:

It is critical that each region look to their provincial legislation or regulations on trespass to ensure that perimeter and boundary signage is adequate and appropriately reflects our stewardship goals. If the intention is to prohibit access, a particular type of signage may be required. If the intention is to sign the boundary that they may access the property for some purposes, at the appropriate access point, other signage may be required.

For example, in Ontario, according to the *Trespass to Property Act*, a variety of notices may be used, and we have chosen to use one approach - coloured markings. Red dots or No Trespassing signs mean that entry is prohibited. Yellow dots denote that only certain activities are allowed and it is the responsibility of the individual who wishes to access the property to determine the permissible activities, normally indicated at the access point. Coloured dots should be 10-centimetres in diameter, so signs need to be larger to accommodate them. Signs need to be placed where they can be seen in normal daylight, and wording should be kept to a minimum.

Activity Signage

Activities permitted or not prohibited at particular natural areas are established by the site's management plan, which includes an examination of NCC's responsibilities under provincial occupier's liability legislation. This legislation requires landowners to take whatever steps are reasonable to ensure that people using their premises are not harmed, either by the condition of the property, or by activities on the premises.

Appropriate signage may vary by province. Under the *Occupier's Liability Act* in Ontario, the law establishes a "basic duty of care". This standard is what a reasonable person would do in the circumstance to see that persons using their premises are not harmed, either by the condition of the property, or by activities on the premises. NCC's stewardship of properties examines its responsibilities under this Act for any permitted activities.

There are some types of entrants for whom the "basic duty of care" does not apply, and who willingly assume their own risks or are deemed to assume their own risks. Even in these circumstances however, the occupiers cannot deliberately create a danger to any entrant. Among those who assume their own risks are:

- 1) People who know the possible danger and choose freely to accept legal responsibility for the chance of injury when they enter the premises.
- 2) Any non-paying, but permitted recreational entrant on most rural land, including children, who are responsible for their own safety when they enter rural premises for permitted recreational purposes. Rural premises include cultivated fields, orchards, pastures,
- 3) woodlots and farm ponds. Non-paying entrants are also responsible for their own safety when they enter road allowances, reasonably marked private roads and recreational trails.

- 4) All entrants on most rural property, including children, who do not have express permission to enter, are responsible for their own safety. This law applies to non-recreational as well as recreational activities.

Activity signage must reflect the stewardship goals and requirements for individual properties. Wording should be kept to a minimum, and positive messages regarding activities are preferable to negative wording. Again, regions must consult their provincial legislation or regulations regarding access to property. For example, under Ontario's *Trespass to Property Act*, either signs or graphic illustrations of activities can be used to permit or prohibit them. When a sign indicates that one or more activities are permitted, that sign is also legal notice that any other activities are prohibited. If a sign indicates that only a specific activity is permitted, all other activities are prohibited and prosecutable. On the other hand, if a sign indicates that just one activity is prohibited, such as fishing, it does not mean that other activities, such as riding or hiking, are not permitted.

All signs should be clearly visible in daylight under normal conditions, and activity signs should be clearly visible at the preferred access points.

Where perimeter signage indicates that it is the visitor's responsibility to understand what activities are possible on a property, it may be preferable to invite a visitor to contact NCC for details ("For questions regarding use, please contact NCC") rather than unnecessarily advertise unpopular prohibitions that may be in place at a site, such as no hunting, to deal with a particular conservation concern that it is not appropriate to note in interpretive signage.



TYPE 6: INTERPRETIVE SIGNS

Use: Interpretive signs can be used to mark trails or significant, lasting features on our NCC sites, or educate visitors generally about conservation biology, regional biological diversity or site history.

Recommended Minimum Message to Attach to Interpretive Signage:



Minimum Components:

Natural Area name and Property name.

Contributing/partner agency/donor

Brief message

NCC logo

Toll-free number (national number, or customized by region)