

ELGIN NATURAL HERITAGE SYSTEMS STUDY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is a Natural Heritage Systems Study (NHSS)?

A NHSS as defined within the Provincial Policy Statement (2014) is a system made up of natural heritage features and areas, and linkages intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species, and ecosystems.

2. Why is Elgin County preparing a NHSS?

Under the Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement (2014) requires that Natural Heritage Systems be identified in Official Plans. Elgin County's first Official Plan was approved in 2013, with the commitment to completing a Natural Heritage Systems Study at the time of the next Official Plan Review. The County is now at that 5-year review period.

3. What information does the NHSS provide?

The Elgin NHSS is a terrestrial science based study that provides a landscape level assessment of existing natural heritage features and functions including areas of natural and scientific interest, wetlands, woodlands, valleylands, meadows and thickets and young tree plantations, and natural heritage systems (excluding fish habitat and other aquatic habitat features).

The Study is based on 2015 aerial photography and uses Geographic Information Systems mapping and modeling. The Study provides maps showing the existing vegetation patches that meet criteria for ecological importance. The study also provides statistics showing how much vegetation cover is in the County and local municipalities (as of 2015) and how much of that meets criteria of ecological importance.

4. Why is a NHSS important?

Elgin's NHSS will address the need for information on the state of the County's natural areas and systems. The identification of natural features and areas in Southwestern Ontario is an important undertaking as past human activities have resulted in the loss or degradation of over 70% of the naturally vegetated areas in Southern Ontario. Elgin County has approximately 20% woodland cover and 24% overall vegetation cover.

5. Who is preparing the Study?

The County contracted the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) to complete the study as UTRCA has experience completing NHSS for other Counties in the region. The Study is guided by a Project Team made up of representatives from the County, the local Conservation Authorities, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and each local municipality. The County's Planning Advisory Committee is overseeing the process.

7. What are the next steps?

The Elgin NHSS, when completed, will provide background, technical research for Elgin County's Official Plan (5-year review) Amendment. Policies to implement the recommendations of the Study will be considered by Elgin County Council following a public consultation process.

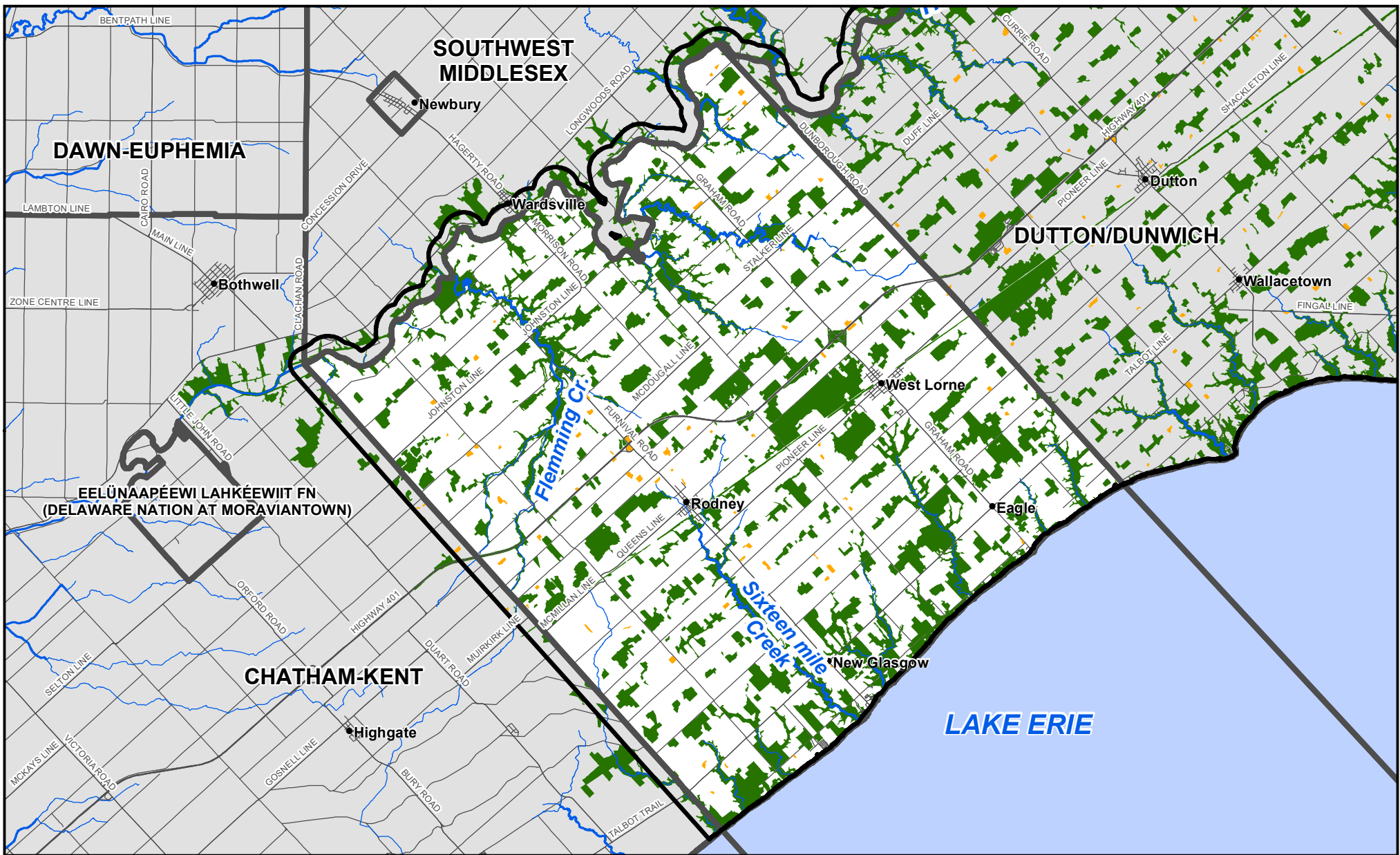
The Official Plan 5-year review process will commence with statutory public meeting(s) to discuss the revisions that may be required. The meeting(s) will be scheduled for some time in the future and all Elgin County residents will be invited to participate as notice will be posted in the local media and online.

Questions or Comments?

Please submit your questions and comments to Elgin County's Planner, Steve Evans - sevens@elgin.ca.

The following maps depict the vegetation patches that meet criteria for ecological importance. Maps for each local municipality, the City of St. Thomas, and the County of Elgin are provided for your review.

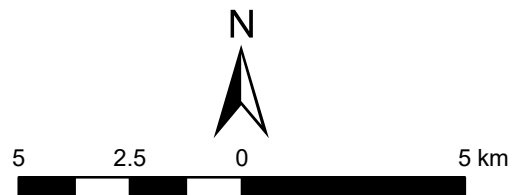




Elgin Natural Heritage Systems Study 2019

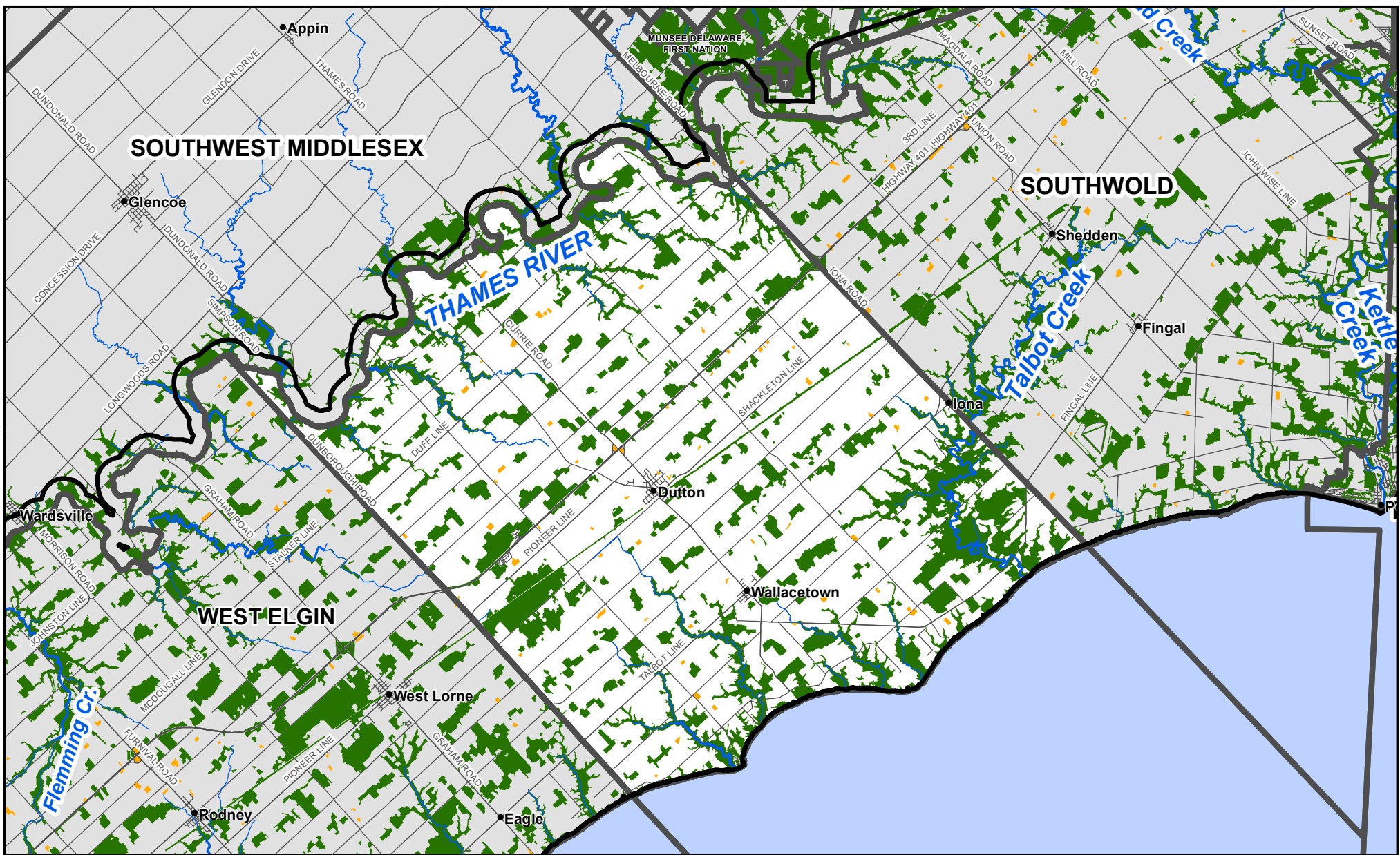
Municipality of West Elgin

Map Produced by Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA), March 2019.
 Basemapping: Land Information Ontario, Copyright © Queens Printer, 2019.
 Patch: Derived from South Western Ontario Orthomimagery (SWOOP) 2015.
 Note: Not all watercourses are shown on map.



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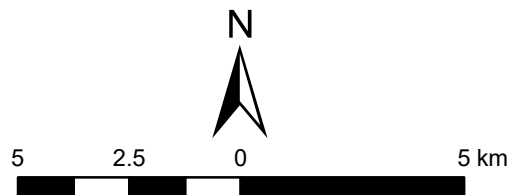
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- Study Area
- Municipal Boundaries



Elgin Natural Heritage Systems Study 2019

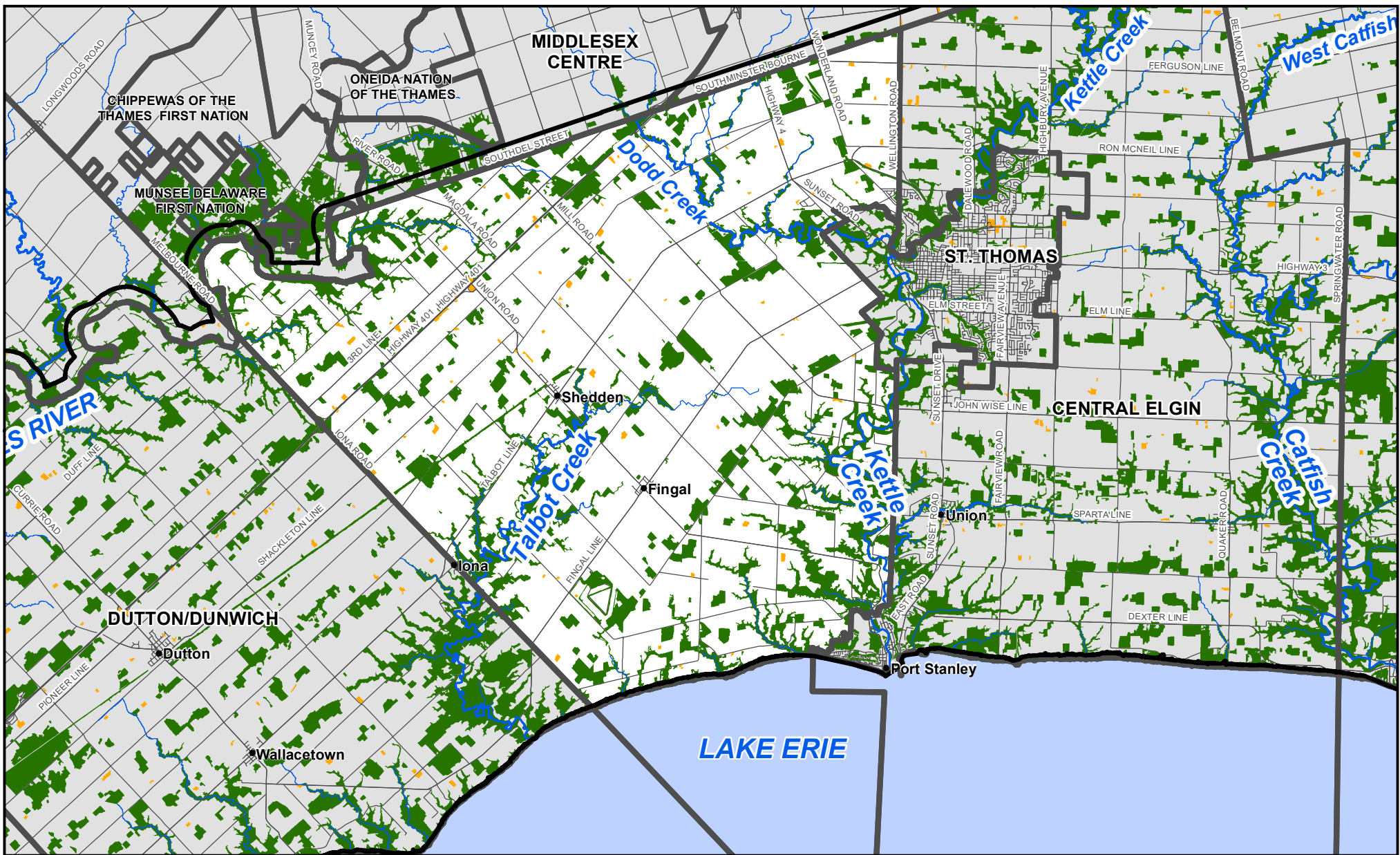
Municipality of Dutton/Dunwich

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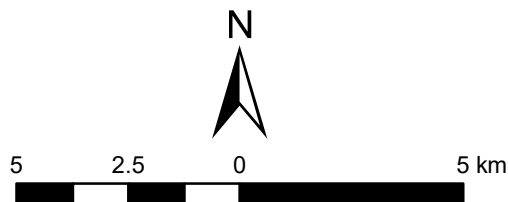
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Elgin Natural Heritage Systems Study 2019

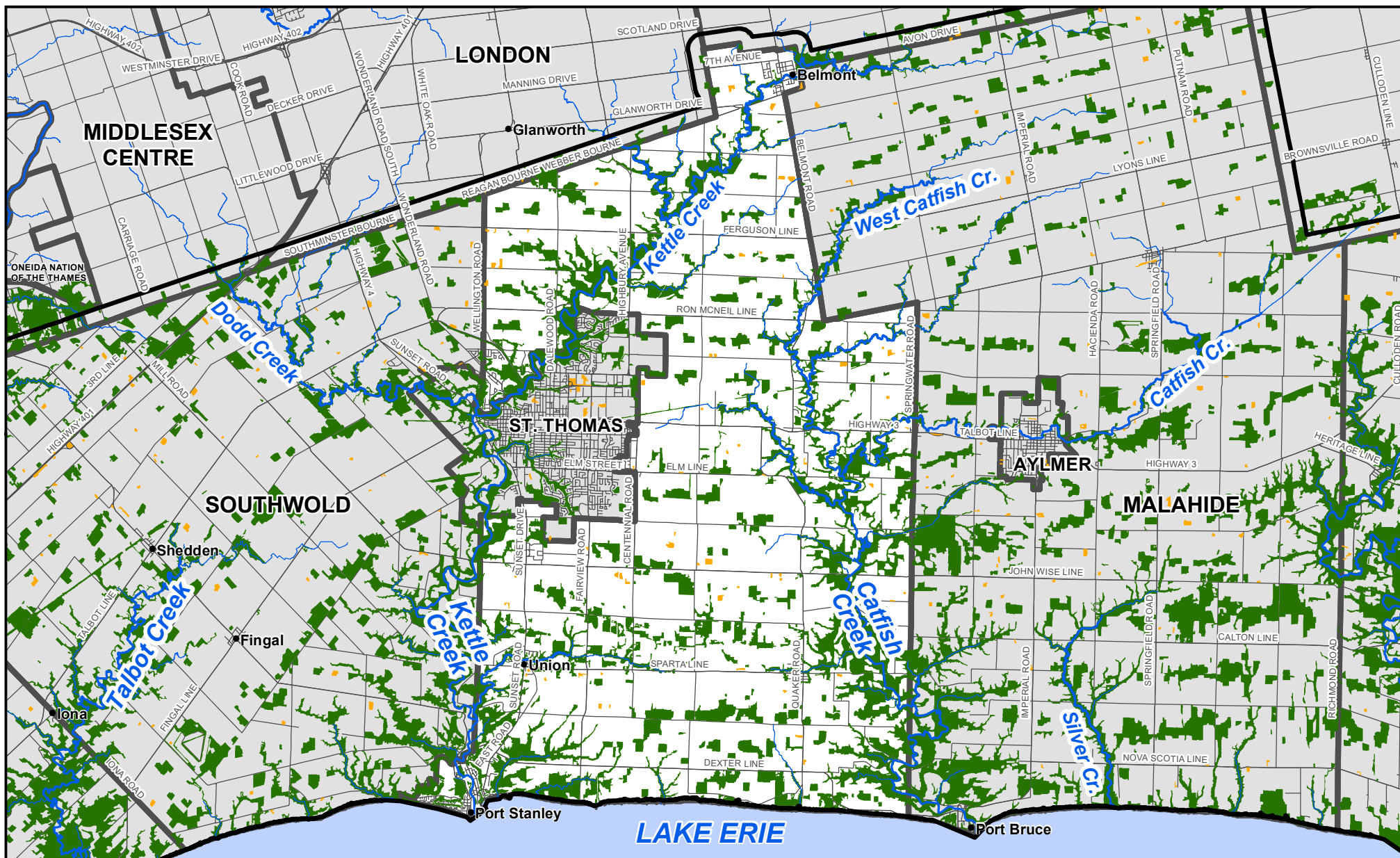
Township of Southwold

Map Produced by Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA), March 2019.
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Elgin Natural Heritage Systems Study 2019

Municipality of Central Elgin

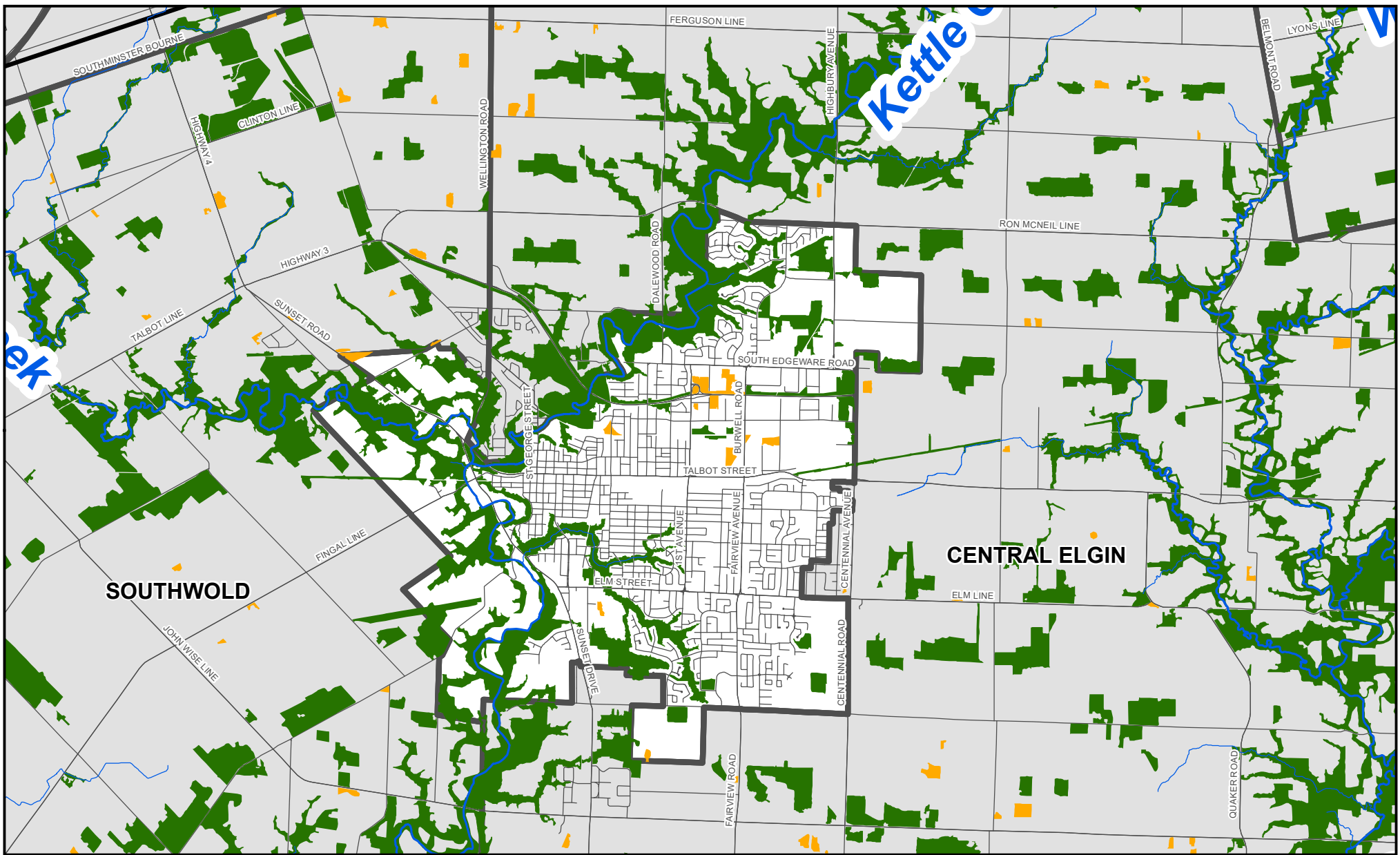
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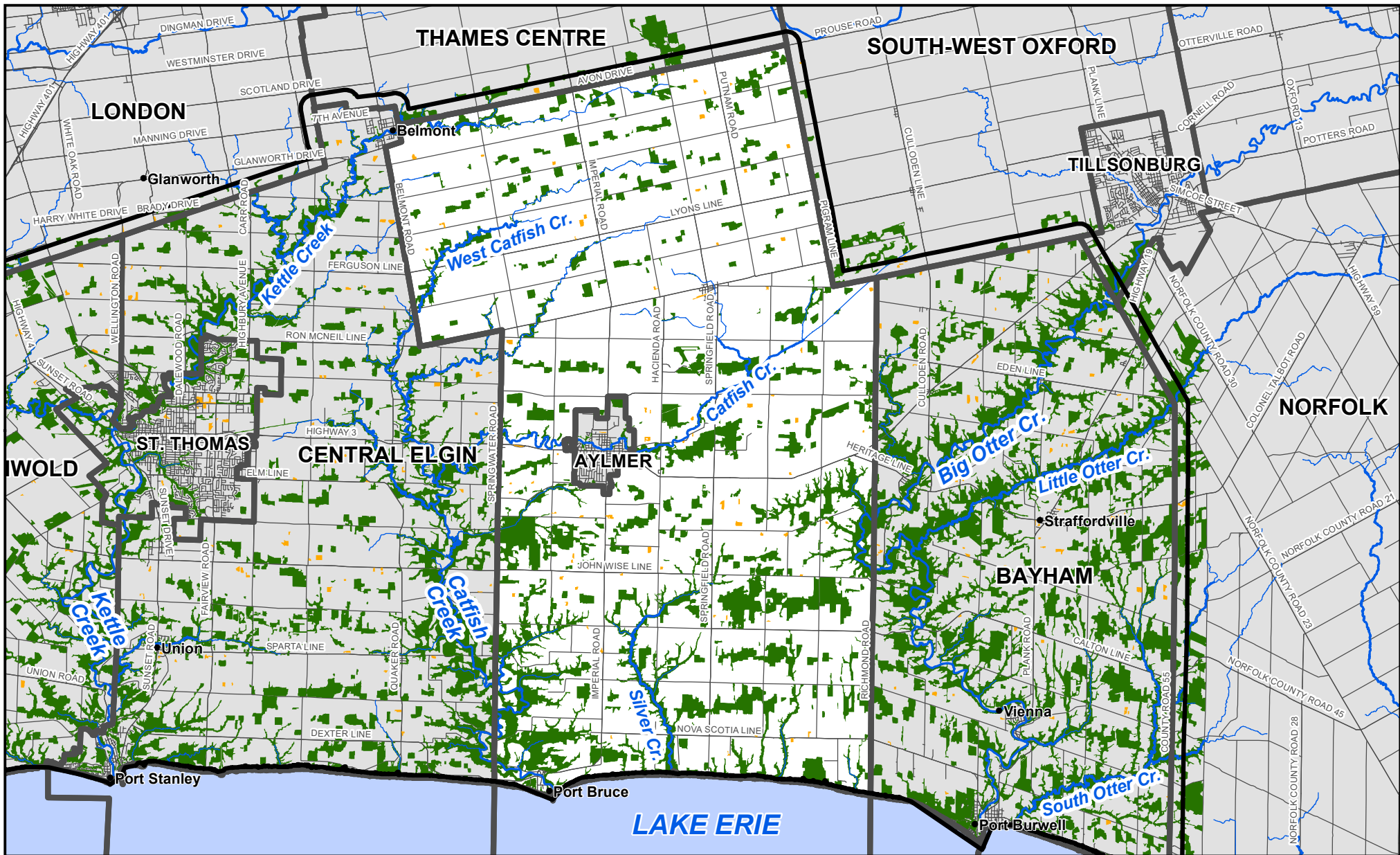


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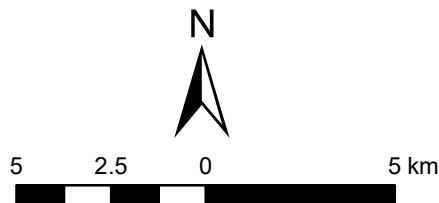




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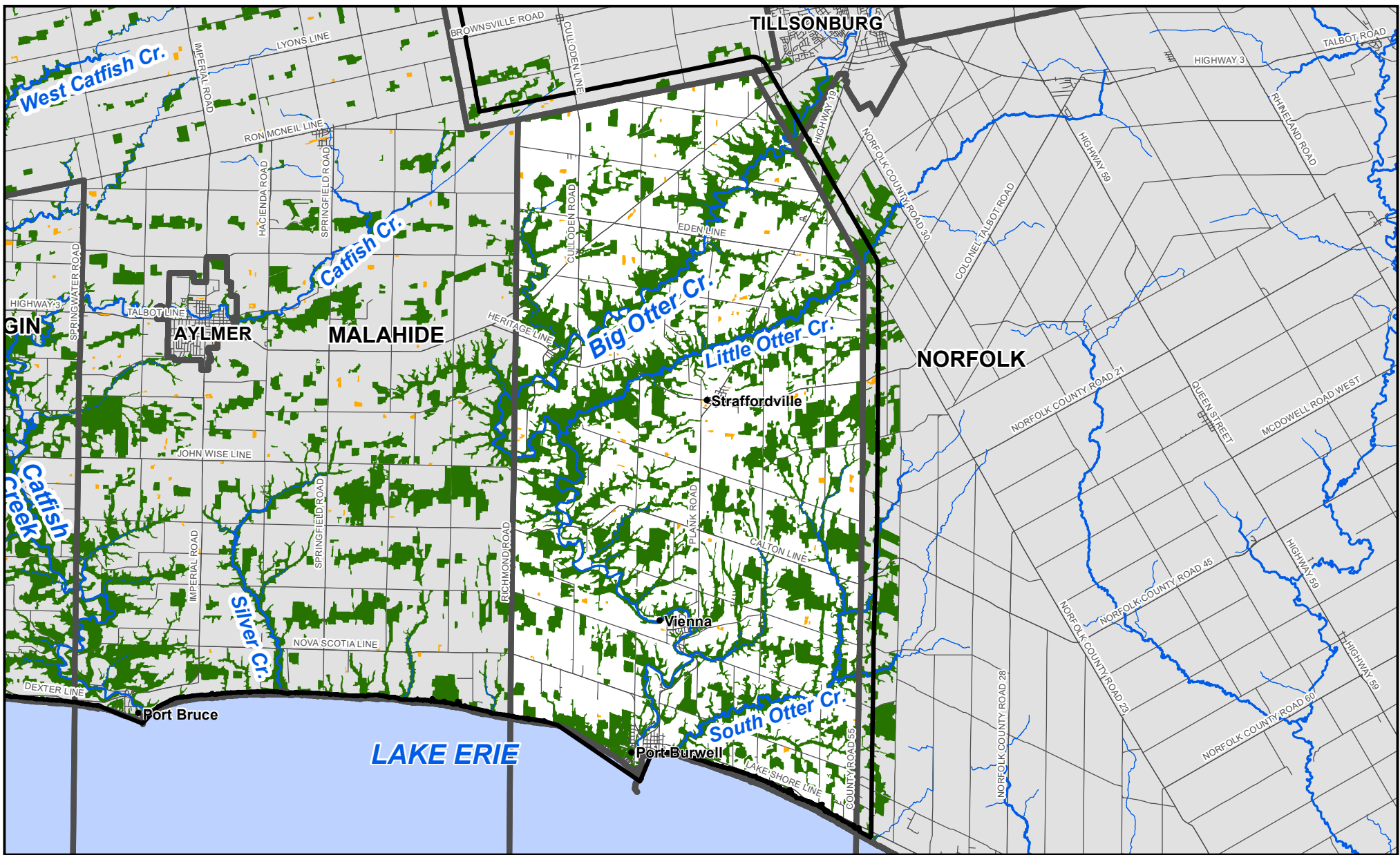
Township of Malahide

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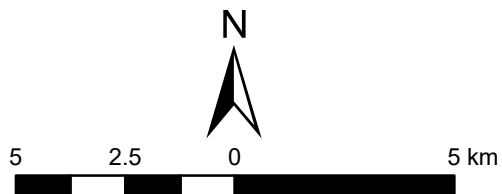
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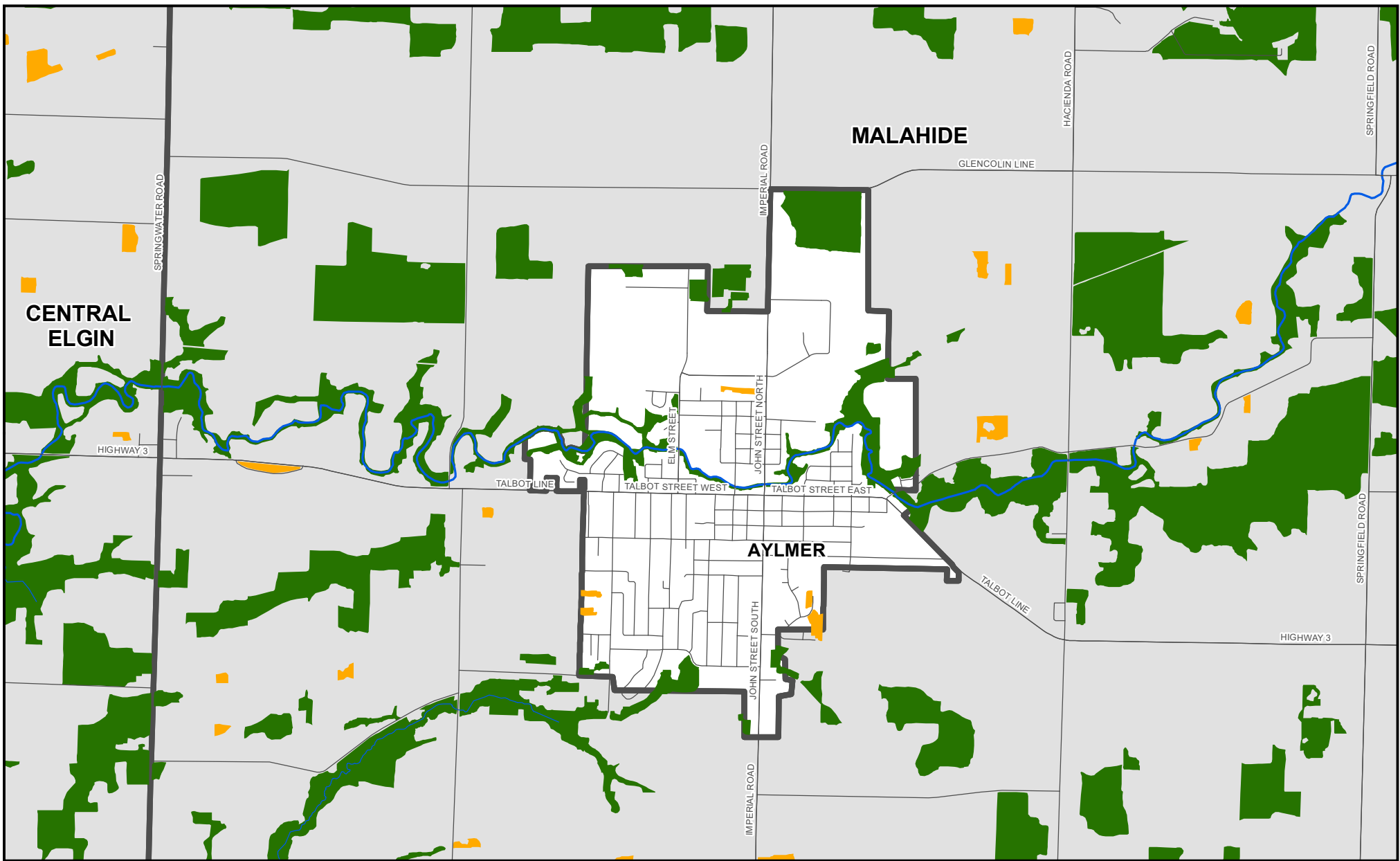
Municipality of Bayham

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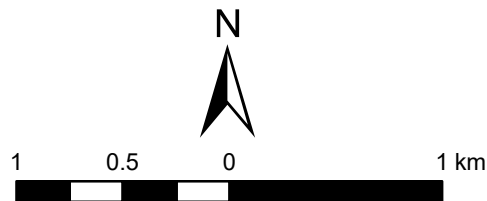
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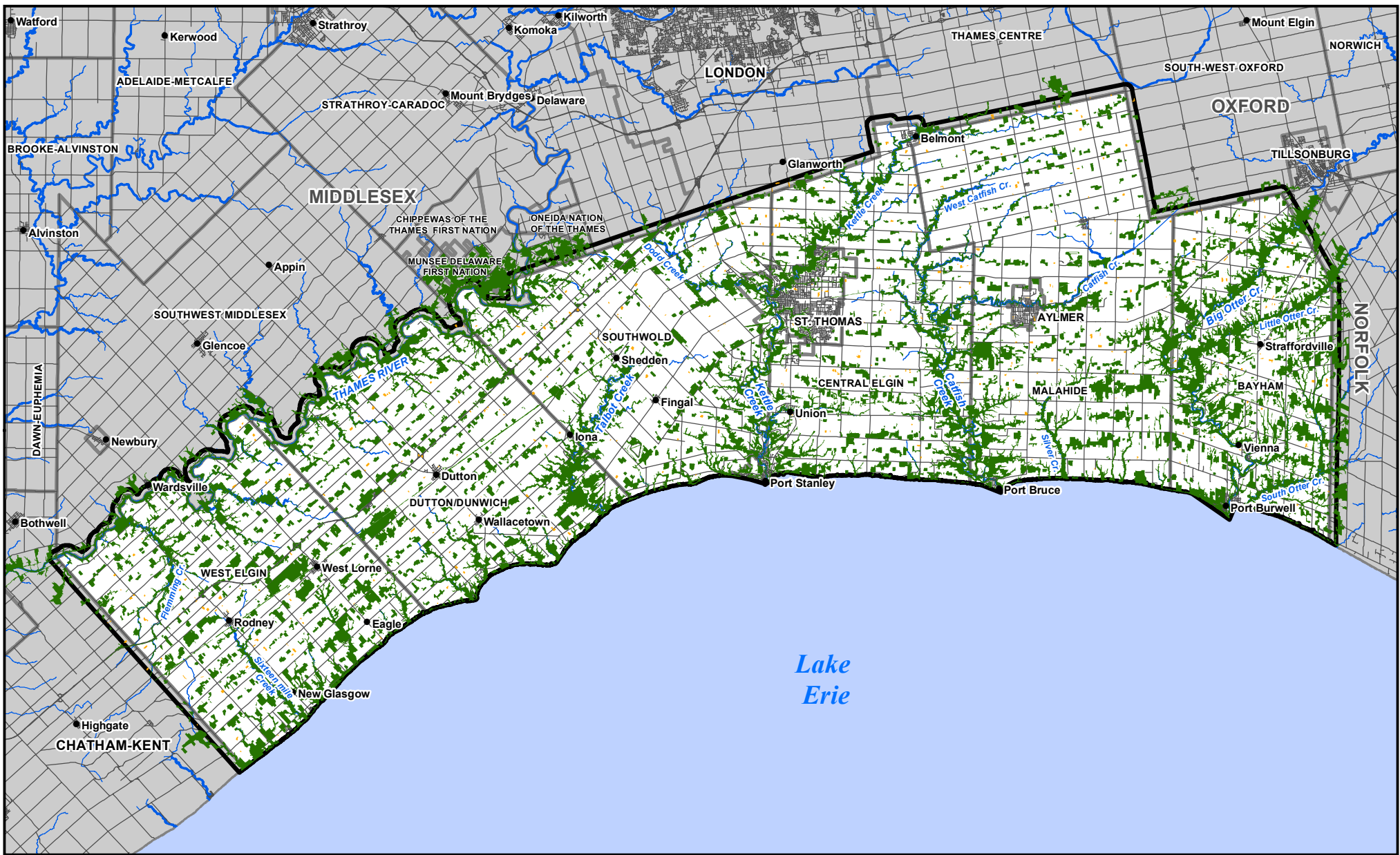
Town of Aylmer

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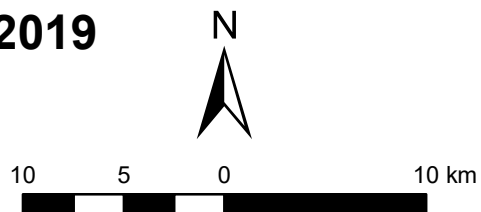
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