

**BACKGROUNDER – REGION OF PEEL & TOWN OF CALEDON
LAND EVALUATION & AREA REVIEW (LEAR)
Public Information Open House – April 7, 2015**

What is a Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR)?

Developed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) a LEAR is the Provincial standard for the identification and refinement of Prime Agricultural Areas by municipalities. A LEAR is a technical assessment which, in addition to the Canada Land Inventory (CLI) soil capability allows other factors to be considered in identifying prime agricultural lands.

Factors are selected, weighted, scored and applied to land parcels within a Study Area to produce a ‘recommended’ identification of Prime Agricultural Areas for land use planning purposes.

Why are the Region of Peel and Town of Caledon Doing a LEAR?

The LEAR being undertaken is an agricultural background study to inform the current Region of Peel Official Plan Review. Current mapping of Prime Agricultural Areas in the Region’s Official Plan is based on methods from the 1990’s. Since that time, the Province released the LEAR technical guidelines. The LEAR will ensure that the mapping of Prime Agricultural Areas in both the Region and Town’s Official Plans are consistent with Provincial policy and guidelines.

If the LEAR recommends revisions to the Prime Agricultural Area, a formal amendment process under the Planning Act will be required to incorporate the change into the Region and Town’s Official Plans.

What is the Study Area?

The Study Area for the LEAR includes:

- Lands designated Rural, General Agriculture and Prime Agriculture in the Town of Caledon Official Plan.
- Lands designated Prime Agriculture Area in the Region of Peel Official Plan.

The Study Area excludes:

- Lands designated Prime Agriculture, General Agriculture or Rural by the Region and/or Town’s Official Plans which do not comprise 250 contiguous hectares or greater and that were not classified “Farmed” by the Ecological Land Classification data.
 - Lands within settlement areas and urban boundaries.
 - Properties within the Study Area that have been previously redesignated to permit a non-farm land use.
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How is a LEAR Assessed?

Each Evaluation Unit (individual property parcel) receives a LEAR score out of a total possible score of 800, which was established by the LEAR model. This score is determined by an assessment of a series of factors that are calculated and added together for each Evaluation Unit.

The closer an Evaluation Unit's score is to 800, indicates its potential of being prime agricultural land.

1. Land Evaluation (LE) = 50% of Total LEAR Score

The LE score is based on physical factors of the land. The Canada Land Inventory (CLI) soil capability for agriculture was selected as the factor to determine the Land Evaluation (LE) score. Its information was used to identify and score the type of soil and topography for the Evaluation Unit.

2. Area Review (AR) = 50% of Total LEAR Score

Four factors were selected to assess the Area Review:

- Fragmentation (12.5%)
- Percentage of Evaluation Unit in Agricultural Use (12.5%)
- Agricultural Uses within One Kilometre of Evaluation Unit (12.5%)
- Conflicting Land Uses (12.5%)

Fragmentation

Fragmentation is an assessment of the number of parcels within 300 meters of the Evaluation Unit, excluding the Evaluation Unit itself.

Percentage of Agricultural lands in production in the Evaluation Unit

Percentage of Agricultural lands in production in the Evaluation Unit assesses the percentage of land within that Evaluation Unit that is being used for agriculture.

Percentage of land in agricultural production within 1 km of the agricultural unit

Percentage of land in agricultural production within 1 km of the agricultural unit assesses the percentage of the total land in agricultural production that is within one kilometer of the Evaluation Unit.

Conflicting Land Uses

Three types of conflicting land use equally make up the 12.5% score for this factor:

- Non-farm and sensitive land uses
 - Location to urban areas
 - Location to major traffic arteries
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What is a 'Threshold'?

After each Evaluation Unit is given its score, the LEAR scores for the entire Study Area can be assessed. The selection of a threshold score to identify Prime Agricultural Areas considers the pattern and distribution of high scoring Evaluation Units. Lands that fall below the recommended Threshold would retain their current Official Plan designation or be considered for a General Agriculture or Rural land use designation.

Who Selected the Factors?

The Region of Peel's Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) was formed as the LEAR Review Committee. The LEAR Review Committee also includes staff representatives from OMAF, Credit Valley Conservation and Toronto and Region Conservation.

In 2013, a series of workshops were undertaken with the LEAR Review Committee to determine the Study Area, select the factors for evaluation and the factor weightings. The LEAR Review Committee assessed the LEAR scores and selected a recommended Threshold score and range.

What Comes Next?

- A second opportunity for public comment on the draft LEAR study report and mapping will be held on **April 7, 2015**.
- Public comments on the draft LEAR study report will be collected until **May 8, 2015**.
- The LEAR Review Committee will provide final recommendations to Region and Town staff.
- Reports on the final results of the LEAR study will be given to both Town of Caledon and Region of Peel Council in 2015.
- Recommended changes to the Region of Peel and Town of Caledon Official Plans to implement the LEAR study recommendations will require a separate and formal amendment process under the Planning Act.

To provide comments and/ or request information, please contact either of the following project managers:

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