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Ontario Ministry of Energy
Guide to Provincial Approvals for Renewable Energy Projects

4. Protecting cultural heritage and the natural environment

Natural heritage

The Ontario government protects significant natural features, such as:

1. Provincially significant wetlands, including those in coastal areas
2. Areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs). ANSIs are areas of land and water that represent significant geological and biological features
3. Significant woodlands and valleylands
- 4. Significant habitat necessary to sustain wildlife, including birds and bats**
5. **Provincial parks and conservation reserves**

These natural features, parks and conservation reserves, are protected by a setback for all elements of a renewable energy project. For most features, and for provincial parks and conservation reserves, the setback is 120 metres with the only exception being a setback of 50 metres from earth science areas of natural and scientific interest.

If the applicant wants to locate the project within the setback, they will have to undertake a study and submit a report, as part of the application, that identifies and assesses any negative environmental effects of the project on the feature (or provincial park or conservation reserve) and identifies the mitigation measures to be undertaken to mitigate those effects.

No projects are allowed within provincially significant wetlands in southern Ontario and provincially significant coastal wetlands, even with a study. As well, no project may be allowed to be located in a provincial park or a conservation reserve (except where permitted under the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act).

To help an applicant in protecting these features, the Ministry of Natural Resources will review material in advance of the application being submitted. The Ministry of Natural Resources also provides guidance material to help applicants determine if a feature is significant and offers information on different approaches to minimize environmental effects. Applicants must include a copy of the Ministry of Natural Resources' comments with their REA application.