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# Memo

**To:** Niagara Power Project – Ecological Standing Committee  
**From:** Ed Alkiewicz, Licensing Manager  
**Date:** 3/12/2009  
**Re:** Guidance for selecting candidate locations for additional Osprey Nesting Platforms along the Niagara River corridor

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As mentioned at the December 10, 2008 Ecological Standing Committee (ESC) meeting, the NYPA is working to identify potential locations for the four remaining Osprey nesting platforms. As part of this process, we developed the following criteria to guide the identification and selection of potential platform locations.

Over the next few weeks, we will be actively searching for potential platform locations using a combination of data sources. We would like to utilize the ESC's extensive local knowledge of the area as one of the sources of information. Therefore, if you are aware of a place that fits well with the attached criteria and might make a good platform location along either the Upper or Lower Niagara River, we would like to hear about it using the form provided at the end of this memo.

We ask that you please provide any recommendations you may have to me in writing by April 24, 2009. The project team will then review and evaluate the candidate list of sites using the selection criteria to identify the most promising Osprey platform locations along the river. This will help focus subsequent efforts to provide future nesting platforms for the Osprey Habitat Improvement Project.

Thank you for your help and we look forward to your suggestions.

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## Instructions for Identifying Potential Osprey Nesting Platform Locations

1. Using your knowledge of the area, and the criteria below, identify candidate site locations for Osprey platforms.
2. Record your suggested location(s) on the attached cards. Please provide as much information as possible to help identify the site location. In addition, please provide your contact information in the event that we have follow-up questions.
3. Please point out your suggested site location using an internet map link.
  - a. Go to: <http://www.flashearth.com/>
  - b. Click the map to explore the Earth...
  - c. Under “// Map Source”, select “Microsoft Virtual Earth”
  - d. Under “// Options”, select “Show crosshair”
  - e. Under “// Search”, type in “Niagara River, NY” (or another search term of your choice)
  - f. Navigate to your suggested site, zooming (+) the crosshairs in to the maximum extent.
  - g. Under “// Location”, click on “// Permanent Link”
  - h. Copy the Web Address from your browser into the suggestion form  
(Alternatively, you may write in the Latitude and Longitude values shown).
4. Please return your completed suggestion card(s) to me **by April 24, 2009**.

### *Selection Criteria for Osprey Nesting Platforms*

Each of the criteria described below, and summarized in Table 1, is a potentially important factor in selecting sites for the installation of new nesting poles and platforms for Osprey. These criteria are general in nature. Osprey nest sites may vary widely in their characteristics and there are always exceptions to any rule, but the table outlines factors that may be more or less desirable in most situations. These factors may be more important in attracting Ospreys to new nesting areas than they might be for a well-established or dense local Osprey nesting population.

**Distance from water or foraging areas:** A site close to water or foraging areas (river, lake, large pond) is generally more desirable than a site far from water or foraging areas. Although some Osprey nest a mile or more from water and foraging areas, most nests are located close to water and foraging areas. In general, closer is better, especially in a population that is just getting established. The best sites would likely be within one-half mile or less of water or foraging areas.

**Proximity to other nesting raptors** (Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, other Osprey): Other nesting raptors, such as Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, and other Osprey, may hinder the occupation of a new Osprey nesting pole due to the general territorial nature of these birds. Sites more distant from known nests of these raptors are more desirable than sites close to known nests of these raptors. Peregrine Falcons nest on tall buildings, bridges and cliffs.

Bald Eagles nest in large trees, often pine trees near water, and generally distant from human disturbance. Ospreys are known to nest at Buckhorn Marsh and Tonawanda Coke; a platform is located at Buckhorn and one will be installed soon at East River Marsh.

**Proximity to thickly forested woodlands:** Osprey nest sites near thickly forested woodlands are generally less successful than Osprey nest sites distant from these areas. Thickly forested woodlands may have competing raptors or predators such as Great Horned Owls. Sites that are not close to thickly forested woodlands would be more desirable.

**Height of nearest adjacent trees:** Ospreys often prefer to nest in trees at least as tall as or taller than the closest surrounding trees. The most desirable sites would have trees that are lower than a pole-mounted platform installed at the site. In general, sites with tall trees nearby would be less desirable.

**Ease of public viewing:** Nesting Ospreys are a joy to watch, especially with binoculars or spotting scopes. The most desirable sites would provide clear viewing opportunities for the enjoyment of the general public. The best sites might be those that could be observed from land or water. Remote locations that are not easily observed would be less desirable.

**Potential disturbance by people, industry, or pets:** Disturbance from people, industry, or pets is an important consideration in selecting an Osprey pole location. Although some Ospreys may be surprisingly tolerant of limited or brief disturbances, it is generally most desirable to select sites where such disturbances are minimized. Sites directly adjacent to busy industrial sites, highways, or where large numbers of people and pets congregate are generally less desirable than sites with less disturbance.

**Land ownership:** Public land is more desirable than private land to facilitate pole installation, management, monitoring, and the enjoyment of the site by the general public. Private land may be acceptable, but would require legally binding agreements for access

**Condition of soils at site:** The condition of soils at the site of installation is an important consideration as well. The most desirable soils would be firm, dry, clean, upland soils that would provide adequate support for the pole and for the vehicles required for installation. In general, wet, soft, or potentially contaminated soils would not be suitable sites for an Osprey pole, both because of engineering (stability) issues and because of permitting and environmental impact issues.

**Ease of access to pole installation location:** Osprey poles are tall and heavy and their installation requires access for large wheeled or tracked vehicles. These vehicles will bore holes in the ground and set the poles in place. An access route at least ten feet wide will be necessary for these vehicles to reach the installation site. The most desirable locations would require the least disturbance to lawns, fences, trees, shrubs, or other local features. Sites with close proximity to deeper water may provide access for installation barges. Sites with difficult access would be less desirable.

**Potential impacts to sensitive areas from installation** (wetlands; rare, threatened, endangered species; cultural resources): The most desirable sites for an Osprey pole installation would have no potential impacts from the pole installation on wetlands, sensitive species or habitats, and cultural resources. Although all sites will be restored, particularly sensitive areas are not suitable for the installation of an Osprey pole and should be avoided.

Table 1. Selection Criteria for Osprey Pole Locations in the Vicinity of the Niagara Power Project.

Criteria	More Desirable <span style="font-size: 1.2em;">→</span> Less Desirable		
Distance from water or foraging areas	Near (On shoreline)	Moderate	Far (over 1 mile)
Proximity to other raptors (Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, other Osprey)	Osprey observed in area and no other raptors known to nest nearby	Osprey observed in area but other raptors known to nest nearby	No Osprey nearby but other raptors known to nest nearby
Proximity to thickly forested woodlands	Far	Moderate	Near
Height of nearest adjacent trees	Low	Moderate	High
Ease of public viewing	Excellent from land or water	Good	Limited
Potential disturbance by people, industry, or pets	Low	Moderate	High
Land ownership	Public	Private with easement or not-for-profit conservation organization	Purchase Private Land
Condition of soils at site	Firm, clean upland soils	Potentially contaminated or moderately unstable soils	Very unstable soils or high potential for contaminants
Ease of access to pole installation location	Easy	Moderate	Difficult
Potential impacts to sensitive areas from installation (wetlands; rare, threatened, endangered species; cultural resources)	Low	Moderate	High

***Osprey Nesting Platform Site Suggestion Card***  
*Niagara Power Project*  
*Osprey Habitat Improvement Project – March 2009*

**Suggestion No.:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(For NYPA use only)*

**Location of Site** (address, street, nearest cross-street, property owner, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

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**Description of Site** (sketch on back): \_\_\_\_\_

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**Internet Map Link to Site** (see instruction sheet for details):

Link: \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: \_\_\_\_ ° \_\_\_\_ ' \_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_ " N Longitude: \_\_\_\_ ° \_\_\_\_ ' \_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_ " W

Please provide the following contact information should we have questions regarding your suggestion:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_



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