

3 Research Task and Methodology

3.1 The Research Task

The tasks for this project were undertaken with two basic aims:

- To discover barriers to participation of farmers in current and possible future agri-environmental programs; and,
- To inform CFFO members, other farmers and other interested stakeholders about agri-environmental programs and the benefits of participation in them.

The results of the first aim will assist all stakeholders in anticipating and overcoming the types of barriers to participation which may be expected with voluntary programs delivering environmental payments. The results of the second research aim will serve to inform others of the concept of environmental payments and the CFFO's position on the potential use of this economic instrument. Together it is hoped that the report provides a good understanding of the barriers to participation in agri-environmental programs so that practitioners may overcome them.

3.2 Methodology

A mixed research methodology was used in this study. This employed qualitative inquiry through open-ended key-informant interviews, a multi-stakeholder meeting and five structured focus groups. Quantitative methods were used in empirical data gathering and statistical analysis. All information was set in a provincially regional context of five areas defined for this study.

The phases of work described in Sections 4 to 6 form the core of new, empirical information on barriers to participation in existing agri-environmental programs delivered in Ontario. Conclusions for the consideration of the CFFO and other potential decision-makers are made in Section 8.

One planned phase of work could not be accomplished. This would have been a questionnaire survey of a representative sample of farmers throughout Ontario to validate the qualitative findings. Unfortunately, except for the CFFO, which would have provided

access to its own membership data, no other access could be obtained from any farm organization or government agency having accurate records of registered farmers in Ontario.

3.2.1 Mapping, Literature Review and Data Collection

The province was divided into five regions for this project: North, East, Shield, South and Southwest Regions (Figure 1.1). The division was based on the bio-physical characteristics of each region and the major watersheds within them. The watershed is the preferred spatial unit in ecological studies and is used by Conservation Authorities. It is, however, seldom possible to match municipal boundaries and census statistics with watershed boundaries.

Existing information on participation in agri-environmental programs was gathered from both published and unpublished sources and reported in Section 4. New information on participation in programs was gathered for this project and reported in Section 5. Census and other statistical information was collected to add depth and context to the study and to compare with the qualitative findings. Much of this information was mapped for the five study regions to allow a discussion of the geographic variations in program participation within Ontario.

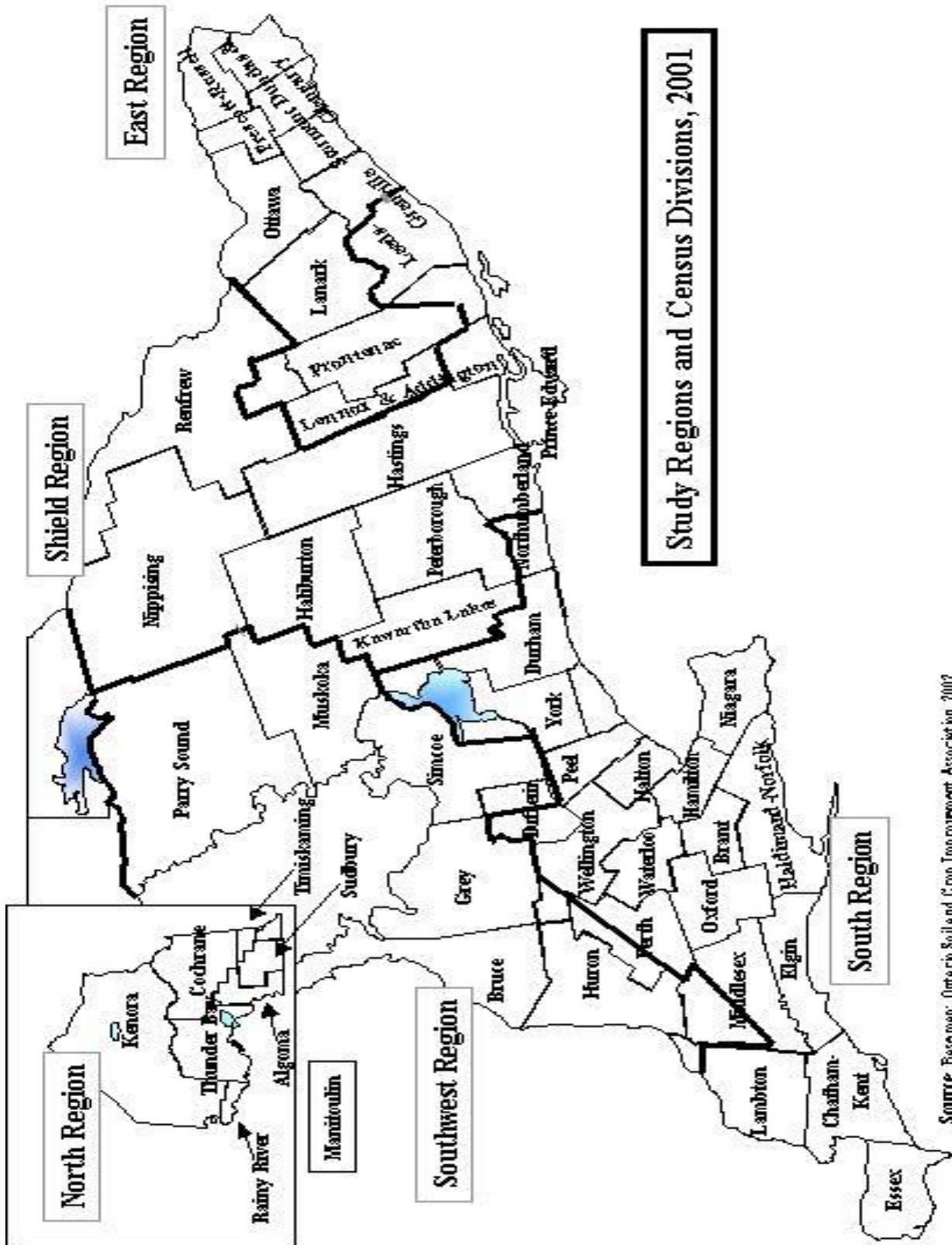
The 2001 CFFO farm show survey, which inspired this inquiry, has been re-analyzed by Region and by Primary and Secondary farmer and described in Section 5.3. This survey was designed by the author in collaboration with Elbert van Donkersgoed, Senior Policy Advisor to the CFFO.

Section 5 also gives information on participation in two current agri-environmental programs in Ontario, the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) and the Rural Water Quality Program. The first is delivered by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) and the second mainly by Ontario's Conservation Authorities (CA). EFP participation was mapped for each region and compared with selected census farming characteristics. Participation rates in the Rural Water Quality Program were tabulated for selected watersheds, according to the availability of data.

3.2.2 Key-Informant Interviews

To discover barriers to participation in existing and past programs from the point of view of program designers and delivery agents, some 18 semi-structured key-informant

Figure 1.1: Study Regions and Census Divisions, 2001



Source: Esri map; Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, 2002.
 Source: Base map: Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, 2002.

interviews were conducted for this project. These were among about 33 professionals and other experts throughout the province. These informants are listed in the Acknowledgements of this report. All were involved in program funding, design or delivery, or were academics with experience in this domain. During these interviews, notes were taken or tape recordings made for later coding, thematic reduction and analysis. Many themes relating to participation in programs were identified from these meetings and are treated in Section 6.2.

3.2.3 Focus Groups

To discover barriers to participation in existing and past programs from the point of view of farmers, five confidential focus groups were held, one in each study region. The locations and dates of the focus groups were:

- Hanover, Southwest Region (September 27, 2002);
- Winchester, East Region (September 30, 2002);
- Lindsey, Shield Region (November 6, 2002);
- Ingersoll, South Region (December 2, 2002); and
- Earleton, North Region (December 13, 2002).

Each focus group lasted approximately one and one-half hours and had from three to seven participants, for a total of 25. Each participant received a cash stipend and complete information about the project and its purpose. All participants were farmers. The majority were men, but women also contributed at two meetings. Focus group participants were recruited with the assistance of farm organization contacts, program personnel or through a modified snow-ball technique within each region. In this technique a first recruit suggests the name(s) of another, and so on. Membership in the CFFO was not a consideration in the selection.

The same schedule of subjects on participation and the feasibility of programs containing environmental payments was used in each focus group. Notes were taken throughout the meeting, or a tape recording was made for later transcription, coding,

thematic reduction and analysis. The subjects and themes relating to barriers to participation derived from the focus groups are treated in Section 6.3.

3.2.4 Stakeholder Meeting

A separate phase of work consisted of a public multi-stakeholder meeting held on October 16 at the CFFO facility and lasting about 4 hours. It had three purposes, to:

- Disseminate information on existing agri-environmental programs;
- Inform participants of the CFFO research on environmental payments; and,
- Collect further primary information in a multi-stakeholder environment.

The 62 participants at this meeting were recruited through advertisements in three farm/rural journals, by direct invitation to the membership of the CFFO through its district and executive leaders, by direct invitation using e-mail of a wide range of contacts and key-informants in government, academia, delivery agencies and through a notice to Ontag, an email listserve of farm interests. All electronic invitations contained a request to forward the invitation to anyone who might have been interested in attending. In this way, a wide audience was potentially reached.

The majority of participants were practitioners in program delivery. A considerable number of members of the CFFO executive also participated. Despite our efforts to recruit members-at-large of the CFFO, or any other farmers to this meeting, few were attracted. As a consequence, farmers were markedly under-represented at the stakeholder meeting.

A full report of this public stakeholder meeting and list of participants was prepared and distributed to all in attendance (Appendix I) and others who expressed interest. The meeting is further discussed in Section 6.4.

3.2.5 CFFO 2002 Workshop Survey

Finally, the results of a 2002 survey on environmental payments designed by the author as part of the annual CFFO workshop series (CFFO, 2002) were re-analyzed for this report and discussed in Section 7. Appendix II reproduces the original analysis and summary statement from the workshop series.