

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-15-26
Title:	Marlane Farms Minor Exemption
Prepared by:	Sarah Johnson, Trails and Forestry Coordinator
Reviewed by:	Scott Taylor, Director of Planning
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	Township of Chatsworth

Recommendation

1. That report PDR-CW-15-26 be received; and
2. That the application for minor exemption under the County’s Forest Management By-law for Part of Lot 54, Concession 2 EGR, geographic Township of Holland, now in the Township of Chatsworth, municipally known as 395656 Concession 2, be approved.

Executive Summary

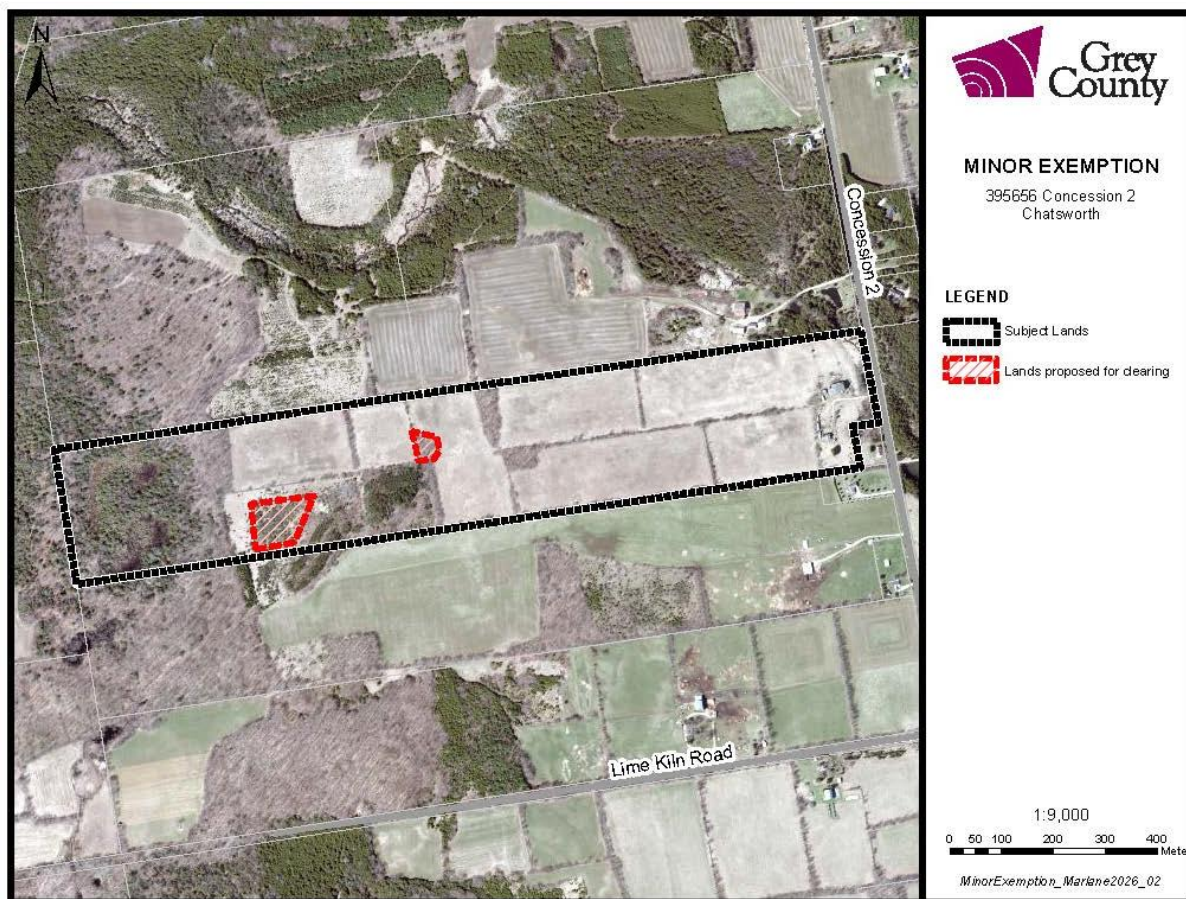
The County received a minor exemption application under the County’s Forest Management By-law in February 2026 to clear woodlands consisting of approximately 1.4 hectares (3.5 acres) of Scots Pine including a small area of Basswood, Sugar Maple and White Elm. The purpose of the clearing is for agricultural purposes. County staff are recommending approval of this minor exemption application.

Background and Discussion

An application for a minor exemption was received for clear-cutting in a woodland under the County’s Forest Management By-law. The application is seeking approval to clear approximately 1.4 hectares (3.5 acres) of Scots Pine including a small area of Basswood, Sugar Maple and White Elm. Map 1 below shows the subject lands, and those lands proposed for clearing.

The subject lands are located at Part of Lot 54, Concession 2 EGR, geographic Township of Holland, now in the Township of Chatsworth, municipally known as 395656 Concession 2. The majority of the property is farmed and cleared fields, with some woodlands and the total size of the property is 41.2 hectares (101.7 acres). As noted above, this application seeks to clear approximately 1.4 hectares for agricultural purposes. Surrounding the subject lands are mainly farmed and forested lands.

In the County official plan, this property is designated as 'Rural' and 'Hazard Lands' on Schedule A. The subject lands have a small portion designated as 'Aggregate Resource Area' on Schedule B to the official plan. This proposed tree clearing does not have any impact on the aggregate resources on-site. Portions of the subject lands are mapped as 'significant woodlands' and 'other wetlands' on Appendix B to the official plan. The proposed clearing doesn't occur within the significant woodlands or other wetlands. This application has been reviewed and supported by Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA) and Planning Ecology staff, and a summary of their comments has been included below.



Map 1 – Proposed area for tree removal

The County's climate change action plan, Going Green in Grey, promotes tree planting across the County, including setting tree planting targets. The County's current Forest Management By-law predates Going Green in Grey. The County's by-law is currently under review. One of the objectives of this review is to consider the by-law's relationship to other County plans and strategies such as Recolour Grey, the County official plan, and Going Green in Grey, the climate change action plan. Strictly speaking this minor exemption application is being tested against the current forest management by-law. Staff are however cognizant that the future updated by-law may consider woodland clearing differently, including possibly considering replanting plans or offsetting approaches.

Agency and Public Comments Received

Under the County Forest Management By-law, adjacent landowners, conservation authorities, and municipalities are to be notified and/or consulted when a minor exemption application is received.

Public Comments

No public comments were received during the processing of this application.

Agency Comments

The SVCA, the Township of Chatsworth, the County's Forestry By-law Enforcement Officer, and the County's Planning Ecologist provided comments on this application. A summary of each of their comments is as follows:

- SVCA staff have no concerns.
- The County's By-law Enforcement Officer does not have concerns with the removal of the trees. There would be minimal impact to the loss of the forested habitat given that the Scots Pine is not native to Canada, is prone to numerous diseases and limb failure, and is invasive in many situations. The smaller pocket of deciduous trees is separated from the existing forest by means of an active farm lane/field. Its removal would round off the field edge and could be considered a Normal Farming Practice.
- The Township of Chatsworth had no concerns but noted that it was currently half load season and that those restrictions are in place until May 1, 2026.
- The County's Planning Ecologist noted that the property contains and/or is adjacent to significant woodlands, significant wildlife habitat, potential habitat for threatened and/or endangered species, and other wetlands. It is staff's understanding that the proposed tree cutting will be of non-significant woodlands that provide no ecological benefit to surrounding woodlands. As such, it is staff's opinion that the potential impact to natural heritage would be negligible.

Based on the above, staff are recommending approval of the minor exemption application.

Financial and Resource Implications

None.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Planning, Grey County By-law Enforcement Officer, Planning Ecology
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets: see commentary in the report regarding the relationship between Going Green in Grey and the County's current forest management by-law review.
- External: SVCA, Township of Chatsworth, and the public

Appendices and Attachments

None.