

Fact Sheet

CONSERVATION ONTARIO

Conservation Ontario is a nonprofit organization that represents the network of 36 conservation authorities, natural resource management agencies that are organized and operate on the basis of local watersheds across Ontario. Approximately 95 per cent of Ontario residents live in watersheds managed by conservation authorities.

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

- Protect Ontarians and their property from flooding and erosion hazards
- Restore and protect water and land resources and habitats
- Provide recreational and educational opportunities to local residents, encouraging them to be active and connect with nature
- Deliver programs and services totaling approximately \$418 million annually through 1,996 full and part time staff and 1,252 seasonal and contract staff
- Provide local technical expertise to all levels of government
- Partner closely with municipal, provincial and federal governments, as well as landowners and many other groups and agencies, to deliver community-based programs that ensure healthy watersheds and provide opportunities for Ontarians to connect with nature.
- Most conservation authorities are funded primarily through municipal support and self-generated funding with some support from the Province for provincially mandated programs such as natural hazards and drinking water source protection. Municipal revenues typically make up more than half of the total with another third from self-generated revenues. Provincial and federal revenues make up around four percent each of a conservation authority budget. Smaller conservation authorities rely more on provincial revenues with fewer opportunities for self-generated revenue.

Conservation Authorities Use a Science-based Integrated Watershed Management Approach

An integrated watershed management approach manages human activities and natural resources, together, on a watershed basis taking into consideration environmental, economic and human needs and interests. Typical conservation authority programs include:

Protecting People and Property from Flooding

- In partnership with the Province and municipalities, conservation authorities monitor the potential for flooding, issue warnings to municipalities and others and manage \$3.8 billion dollars of flood control and prevention infrastructure including 900 dams, dykes, channels and erosion control structures

- Programs and services to prevent and control flooding typically offered by conservation authorities include:
 - monitoring conditions year round
 - modeling and forecasting flood conditions
 - issuing flood warnings
 - regulating development in flood prone areas
 - providing support and advice to municipalities to minimize the impacts of flooding
 - purchasing flood-prone lands
 - protecting significant ecosystems such as wetlands and forests that help to control flooding
 - educating the public about flooding hazards

Safe Drinking Water with Source Water Protection

- In partnership with the Province, conservation authorities support Drinking Water Source Protection Committees (SPC) in 19 regions and deliver a number of watershed programs and outreach activities to protect sources of drinking water in their watersheds

Urban and Rural Stewardship for Clean and Sustainable Water Resources

- Each year, Conservation Authorities plant approximately two million trees
- Provide landowners with financial and technical assistance to carry out water quality improvements including projects such as erosion control, clean water diversion, agricultural best management practices, well decommissioning and septic system improvements
- Provide landowners with financial and technical assistance to carry out rehabilitation/restoration projects with wetlands, habitats, shorelines and stream & fish habitat. Many projects are targeted to at invasive species and species at risk
- Identify and target areas for stormwater management and green infrastructure projects

Monitor and Report on the Health of Ontario's Water and Land Resources

- Conservation Authorities operate 448 monitoring sites within the **provincial groundwater quality monitoring network** and 456 sites in the **provincial surface water quality monitoring network**. Conservation Authorities also have 528 surface water quality monitoring sites and 200 groundwater monitoring sites in addition to the provincial partnerships
- Conservation Authorities issue watershed report cards every five years

Connecting People with Nature and Helping to Keep Ontarians Healthy

- Approximately 300 of over 556 conservation areas are open to the public and offer a wide variety of outdoor activities.
- Just over 10 million people visit Conservation Areas each year either as day visitors or campers
- 7,779 campsites and 3,478 km of trails are located within easily accessible conservation areas

Environmental Education

- Conservation Authority outdoor education programs are aligned with Ontario's curriculum Programs and delivered to over 111,543 Ontario students at almost 1,846 schools each year

For more information:

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