



Sharing Conservation Authority Strengths

2010
Annual Report

photo by Jackie O'Neill



www.conservationontario.ca

The Network of Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities

Sharing Conservation Authority Strengths

Message from the Chair and General Manager



Dick Hibma
Chair



Don Pearson
General Manager

Watershed managers face significant challenges to maintain water quality and quantity today. They need to be able to balance the water needs of a rapidly growing society with the ecological needs of our environment – all within the challenge of adapting to the growing and uncertain impacts of climate change.

Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities have been delivering natural resource programs for more than 60 years. Humanity's dependence on nature is at the heart of our work. Not only does nature make people feel good, but our health and economy depend on it – from the food we eat to the water we drink and the air we breathe.

A diverse mix of ecosystems such as wetlands, lakes, and forests, help to reduce pollution, improve water quality, and prevent flooding and erosion. Nature also produces energy and provides a continuous supply of water to businesses and homes. It supports many industries such as manufacturing, fisheries, forestry, tourism, and agriculture. Ontario's Conservation Areas and parks also attract tourists and residents to the outdoors experience for relaxing and having fun. There is little doubt that a healthy natural environment is essential for our health and well-being as well as our livelihoods.

But global warming and climate change impacts threaten the lifestyles of Canadians. Conservation Authority programs build the resiliency we need in our natural environment to adapt to these shifting conditions and extreme events. Stewardship programs, environmental monitoring, information management, and watershed planning are a few examples of the important programs that track climate change impacts and help us to determine future program needs.

To ensure we are prepared to meet existing and future challenges as well as take advantage of emerging opportunities, the network of Conservation Authorities worked together, throughout 2010, to update their collective Strategic Plan.

The **2011- 2015 Conservation Ontario Strategic Plan** relies on Conservation Authorities working closely together, combining their strengths to be the **"Partner of Choice" for managing and adapting to climate change as well as Growing the 'Green Economy'**. To do so, we have identified four priority objectives:

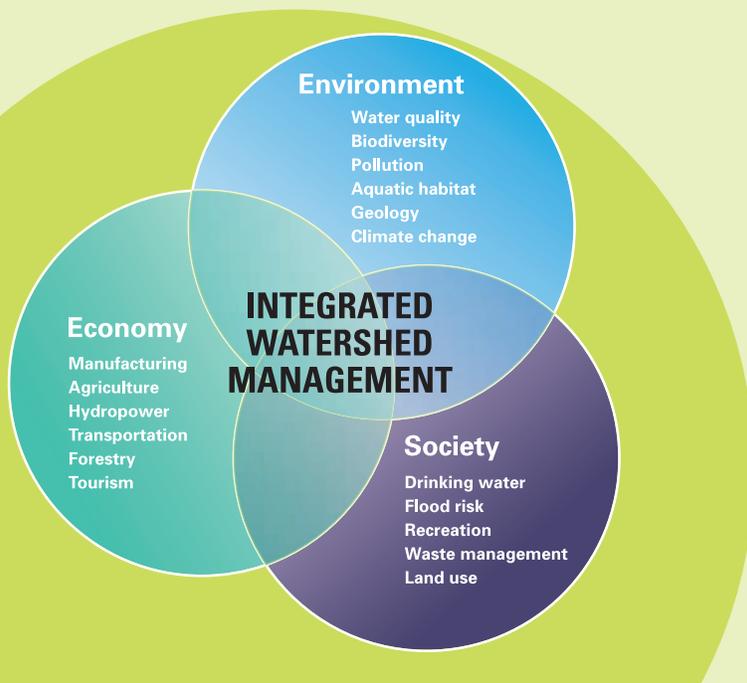
- **Build Coalitions** with government, agencies, residents and others to improve our approach to Integrated Watershed Management
- **Lead in shaping practical, provincial policy** for environmental conservation
- **Be the Trusted Science Brokers** for healthy Great Lakes and climate change resilience
- **Contribute to the Healthy Living movement** by leveraging the Conservation Authorities network's quality of place expertise

Making decisions about our environment is not just the job of Conservation Authorities – it is a shared responsibility among agencies, government, industry and residents. We will continue to do our part to enable smart decision-making by monitoring and reporting on the state of our environment; developing practical programs that ensure sustainable water and land resources; and encouraging Ontario residents to reconnect with their local environment so that they, too, will value and want to protect it.

Despite the challenges that lay ahead of us, we look forward to continuing to work together with our partners to ensure sustainable, healthy watersheds for all in Ontario.

Sharing Responsibility for Water

Integrated Watershed Management



We **do not** have an **unlimited** supply of **water** in Ontario

Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) is an approach that recognizes and operates based on the interconnectedness of ecology, economy, and society. This ensures that adequate supplies of good quality water are maintained for the entire population while still preserving the hydrological, biological, and chemical functions of ecosystems.

Making **decisions** about our **water** is a **shared** responsibility

Using an integrated watershed management approach that takes into consideration all impacts and needs for water resources provides a way for all water users to learn about their water resources and plan for sustainable future water sources.

In 2010: The Province passed the *Ontario Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act* which establishes a framework to drive innovation, create economic opportunities, sustain water infrastructure, and conserve Ontario's water. Conservation Ontario collaborated with a number of Environmental Nonprofit organizations in the Ontario Water Conservation Alliance to respond to the proposed legislation and promote an integrated approach to water management.

Protecting Drinking Water

Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Program (ODWSPP)

- The Source Protection Program reached two milestones in 2010. One was the release of the final phase of Clean Water Act Regulations, which address the content requirements for source protection plans and the process for plan development. Secondly, Conservation Authorities also completed and submitted their Watershed Assessment Reports.
- One of Conservation Ontario's priorities was to support Conservation Authorities as they transitioned to the source protection plan development phase. Conservation Ontario coordinated the formation and support of the Source Protection Planning Advisory Committee (SPPAC) which is developing policy guidance and providing a forum for Source Protection Committee collaboration.
- Conservation Ontario also initiated discussions with Conservation Authorities and the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) on the Conservation Authorities' role and funding model for the plan implementation period (post 2012). In June, Conservation Ontario hosted a day for all Conservation Authority General Managers and CAOs to discuss the future of the program beyond 2012 and specifically the role of Conservation Authorities in Source Protection Plan implementation. The results of this discussion formed the basis of continued dialogue with MOE and the Joint Advisory Committee.
- In partnership with the Province, Conservation Ontario has completed the development of the Assessment Report Database which will facilitate the transfer of Assessment Report databases from Conservation Authorities to MOE using the CAMaps web portal.



Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program (ODWSP)

- 2010 marked the end of funding for stewardship projects delivered under the Early Actions Program which was available to property owners, agricultural producers, and small to medium sized businesses immediately within areas close to municipal drinking water sources which include Surface Water Intakes and Wellhead Protection Areas.
- The types of projects paid for by the Early Actions Program included well decommissioning and upgrading, septic system inspections and upgrades, runoff and erosion control, pollution prevention reviews for businesses, other best management practices and public education. A total of 1,964 best management practices projects were completed by the end of 2010, and 91 are still underway across Ontario.
- The eligible early actions and best management practices funded by the ODWSP were delivered by Conservation Authorities as well the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) in conjunction with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA).

Watershed Stewardship

- In 2010, Conservation Ontario continued strategically important collaborations with Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, Trees Ontario, Provincial Ministries (MOE, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs, Ministry of Natural Resources), Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada as well as the Stewardship Network of Ontario. Conservation Ontario was also a member of the a coalition developing an Ecological Recovery Plan for Canada.
- A key Conservation Authority service is the provision of on-site knowledge and technical support to landowners in planning and implementation of a range of environmental projects on their properties. Conservation Ontario staff continue to facilitate and link Conservation Authority staff to training which improves and enhances their technical skills, adding and demonstrating value to our partners.

In 2010, this included Erosion Control training delivered by staff of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and OMAFRA staff; training to support tree planting services in collaboration with Trees Ontario, Conservation Authorities and other partners; support towards the delivery of the Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program with the Ministry of the Environment; and continuous facilitation of exchange of expertise, knowledge and resources between Conservation Authority staff.

- This expertise leads to a range of benefits:

Conservation Authorities' services support the planting of approximately 70% of all trees planted in southern Ontario (In 2009: 2.9 Million trees, with 1.7 Million of those trees planted in collaboration with Trees Ontario). The grants provided for tree planting leverage other dollars by a ratio of almost 3 to 1, (In 2009: \$3.1 M in grants for an estimated project value of \$8.4 M) stimulating local economic development, generating employment for businesses like tree nurseries, and private planting contractors.

Rural Water Quality Projects delivered on behalf of local municipalities, as well as Conservation Authorities' delivery of the MOE Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program, is estimated to have leveraged grant dollars to other investments, by a ratio of over 2 to 1 (In 2009: \$6.9 M in grants for an estimated project value of \$17.6 M).

Conservation Authority stewardship programs implemented in collaboration with landowners and other partners lead to improvements in water quality in lakes and streams; and protection of drinking water, provide wind and water erosion protection, make poor land more productive; and create wildlife habitat.

Benefits of the Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Program

The Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Program (ODWSPP) has significantly increased our scientific knowledge about conditions in local Ontario watersheds. Information gathered and tools developed through this program have improved local planning; enabled better decision-making and resource targeting; created new technologies allowing the collection of critical data; encouraged new partnerships at all levels; and created new consistencies in program development and implementation. Specifically, the Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Program has:

- Enhanced our knowledge about the state of our environment and helped us to plan how to adapt to climate change impacts
- Enabled more coordinated responses to issues and planning matters
- Promoted more and better information sharing among practitioners and agencies
- Required the development of centralized data management systems or geoportals
- Increased the availability of mapping products and information

Most important, through the various public education and outreach projects undertaken within this program, Ontario's residents have had an opportunity to learn about their local watersheds and how their actions can directly impact the state of our environment. These benefits are shared by Conservation Authorities, Municipalities, the Province, private sector, other agencies, and the general public.

Streamlining Development, Interference & Alteration Regulations

- Conservation Ontario continued to support implementation of the Section 28 regulations through Conservation Ontario teams and through representatives on multi-stakeholder committees focused on streamlining processes and providing clear technical support to the section 28 regulations program.

One of the highlights in 2010, were some amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act through Bill 68, and another was the release of the Policies & Procedures for Conservation Authority Plan Review & Permitting Activities (Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), May 2010). This document was developed through the multi-stakeholder Conservation Authority Liaison Committee (CALC), and clarifies the roles of Conservation Authorities, and identifies key requirements for good client service. MNR training was provided to Conservation Authorities in November 2010 and further multi-stakeholder sessions are being planned by the CALC.

- With regard to streamlining, the multi-agency Drainage Act & Section 28 Regulations Team (DART) worked on best management protocols for coordination between Drainage Act and Conservation Authority Act requirements.
- Additionally, Memoranda of Understanding for Coordination were drafted with the Province for renewable energy projects and with Hydro One for their activities.
- A consultant was engaged in 2010 to undertake a science literature review and a state of practice review, in order to provide recommendations for development of Guidelines for Wetland Environmental Impact Studies in support of Conservation Authority regulation of wetlands.
- A Conservation Ontario Committee of staff experts have been working on tools to support regulatory compliance staff. Accomplishments in 2010 include the Protocol for Conservation Authority Designation of Provincial Offences Officers (P.O.O.) and confirmation and registration for the Conservation Authority Compliance Level 1 training.

Aging Infrastructure Threatens Public Safety

In 2010, Conservation Authorities implemented a total of 66 projects worth \$9 million (\$4.5M from the Ministry of Natural Resources) to ensure the maintenance of aging infrastructure which was built to protect lives and property from flood and erosion. A total of 19 Conservation Authorities received funding approval for 43 repair projects and 20 studies through the Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) program.

Overall there was the potential to invest more than \$11 million (provincial & local) based on eligible submissions thus demonstrating an ongoing strong demand for investment in public safety infrastructure. Increased financial investment in the Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure program is critical to meet the projected significant challenge of increased storm events due to climate change impacts.

Great Lakes Connections

- Conservation Ontario participated on the Canadian Stakeholder Advisory Panel for the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement throughout 2010. Conservation Ontario has submitted positions on governance and technical issues with a strong emphasis on integrated watershed management and the need for coordinated actions between local municipalities, watershed conservation authorities, and basin-wide with provincial agencies and federal departments. Final outcomes are still to be determined via the bi-national negotiation process.
- Additionally, Conservation Ontario provided a representative to the Steering Committee for the Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy which was released in December 2010. Two of the top five areas of concern, based on their concentration of biodiversity coupled with threats, are southern Georgian Bay and the southeast shores of Lake Huron. Conservation Authorities will be looking for opportunities to 'take action' in collaboration with others.

Adapting to Climate Change in Ontario

Climate change continues to be a key driver in Ontario's environment and Conservation Ontario strives to support the work that Conservation Authorities do to help communities adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Conservation Authorities build resilience into our natural systems. They do this through watershed planning, regulation, delivering natural resource and watershed stewardship programs, collecting and communicating critical data, educating residents about their watersheds, and bringing a wide variety of stakeholders to the table to make decisions through integrated watershed planning.

In early 2010, Conservation Ontario released the collective Conservation Authority response to the Premier's Expert Panel Report on Climate Change Adaptation.

This report is supportive of the Expert Panel's recommendations and provides additional advice on how Conservation Authorities can contribute to the Province's strategy around climate change adaptation. Conservation Ontario's response can be found on our website:

www.conservationontario.ca .

In 2010, Conservation Ontario and the Conservation Authorities:

- ✓ published four new reports reviewing the status of integrated watershed management in Ontario and proposing updates for greater effectiveness. Developed in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Ministry of the Environment, these reports are available on Conservation Ontario's website www.conservationontario.ca ;
- ✓ facilitated the development of a number of information management projects funded by and in partnership with government;
- ✓ submitted positions that synthesize Conservation Authority needs for adaptation to climate change in response to provincial and federal public policy development (e.g. Provincial Policy Statement Five Year Review and Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement); and
- ✓ upgraded aging public safety infrastructure in partnership with municipalities and the Ministry of Natural Resources.



Adding To Our Watershed Science

- The **Water Resources Information Program (WRIP)** supports Conservation Authorities in improving the management and access to the information that is essential for their business. The WRIP Roadmap, which is the fifth update to the program, was completed and approved in 2010. The WRIP Roadmap 2010-2015 report calls for several action items within the Conservation Authorities to improve data management including:
 - development of Information Management strategies consistent with the report;
 - development of additional base data priorities; and
 - revision to the Conservation Authority Information Management governance process.
- The **Ministry of Environment's (MOE) GIS Portal**, which is a joint project of Conservation Ontario and MOE was updated and expanded. The portal provides Conservation Authority staff with web-based access to a wide range of provincial water resources data. The portal is used by over 150 Conservation Authority staff.
- The **Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network Data Correction Project** was substantially completed in 2010. This project reviewed and corrected ground water monitoring data in preparation for making it available on the MOE GIS Portal as well as made a number of recommendations for improving data collection.
- **Assessing potential impacts of climate change.** Conservation Ontario, in partnership with the Ministry of Environment completed a two year project that analyzed provincial water monitoring networks (Provincial Stream Water Quality Monitoring Network and Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network) to assess potential impacts of climate change on the groundwater and stream water resources.

The final phase of the study investigated areas in 10 Conservation Authority Watersheds that were particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts and made recommendations for enhancements of the monitoring networks to improve climate change detection and adaptation. Work under this project continues into 2011.

Step Into Nature Trails Open 2010

Ontario's Conservation Areas offer a window of opportunity for our residents to experience nature in their backyard. To help them do so, Conservation Ontario and a total of 26 Conservation Authorities participated in Trails Open 2010. The Conservation Authorities offered 42 events on Conservation Ontario's website including many unique activities such as:

- Tiny Treks & Nature Babies hikes
- Boots and Bugs hike
- Wildflower Walks, Historical Treks, or Geocaching
- I Spy Nature Hikes and Nature at Night
- Spring Bird Festivals, Forest Adventure and Water Trail Paddle Day

As well, often Conservation Authorities were able to partner with other agencies and groups such as the Iroquoia Bruce Trail Club, Cycling Hamilton, and the Blue Mountain Bruce Trail Club.

2010 Ontario Outstanding Young Farmers' Award

Conservation Ontario was a proud sponsor of the Ontario Outstanding Young Farmers' Award in 2010. Mount Albert-area farmers Lisa and Steve Cooper received the award from a shortlist of six nominations. This farming couple went on to also win the National Outstanding Young Farmers' Award. Celebrating its 30th year, Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers program is an independent annual competition to recognize farmers that exemplify excellence in their profession and promote the tremendous contribution of agriculture and rural Canada.

Farmers nominated and selected for this award are judged according to:

- Progress made in their agricultural career
- Environmental and safety practices
- Crop and livestock production history
- Financial and management practices
- Contributions to the well being of their community, province, nation

A.D. Latornell Conservation Symposium

The theme of the 2010 A.D. Latornell Conservation Symposium was *Biodiversity: Connecting People, Land and Water*. This topic aligned with the United Nations' Year of Biodiversity. Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy was highlighted by the Ministry of Natural Resources in a special VIP section of the Exhibit Hall where they collected delegates' opinions of the strategy in preparation for moving forward. Keynote speakers included Richard Louv (Journalist and author of seven books about the connections between family, nature, and community), Wayne Roberts (Manager of Toronto Food Policy Council), Gord Miller (Environmental Commissioner of Ontario), Mathis Wackernagle (Founder and Executive Director of Global Footprint Network), and Bill Dennison (Professor of Marine Science and Vice President for Science Applications at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science).

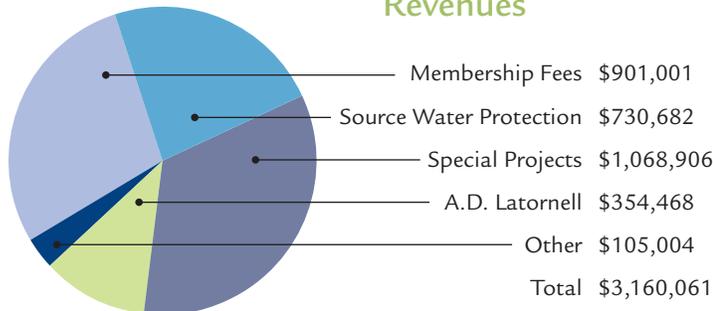
The Symposium honoured four Conservation Pioneers who exemplified lifetime achievements including:

Stewart Hilts (Hutchinson's Corner, Beaver Valley)
Gilbert Henderson (St. George)
Don Ross (Landsdowne, Thousand Islands)
Vicki Barron (Etobicoke)

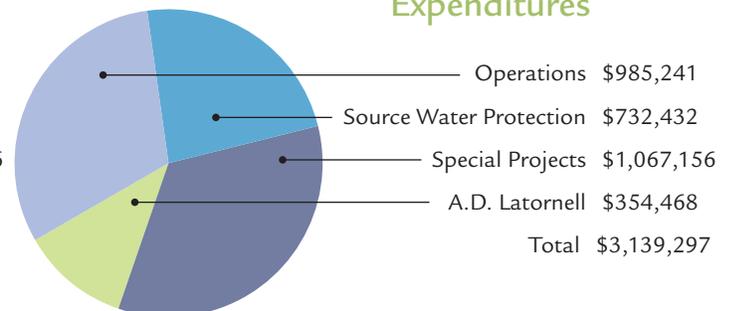


2010 Financial Information

Revenues



Expenditures



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