



# 2006 WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES AND PARTNERSHIPS

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES have a long history and are well known globally for their work in planning and delivering watershed stewardship initiatives to protect, restore and effectively manage Ontario's watersheds.

**The goal of watershed stewardship is to protect and improve the health of our watersheds in ontario.**

Although the types of programs may vary between Conservation Authorities, water quality improvement projects and tree planting projects are the most predominant across the province.

Key to the success of Conservation Authority programs are important local partnerships with various organizations such as government, stewardship councils, environmental organizations, community groups and landowners.

WATERSHED-BASED STEWARDSHIP RECOGNIZES THAT EVERYTHING IN A WATERSHED IS NATURALLY CONNECTED AND IMPACTS ON EACH OTHER.



# CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES DELIVER PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS



## WORKING TO PROTECT SPECIES AT RISK

Ontario's Conservation Authorities have a long history in working directly with both farm and non farm landowners to protect, enhance and restore species and their habitats. With regard to terrestrial and aquatic species at risk in Ontario, Conservation Authorities use a watershed approach to develop their stewardship initiatives such as:

- Developing and implementing multi-species or single species recovery strategies,
- Engaging landowners to locate and map species at risk, and
- Working with landowners to collect seeds from acceptable sources and plant seedlings on many sites

In some cases, watershed stewardship recovery and rehabilitation projects are coordinated in partnership with other organizations such as federal and provincial governments, municipalities, stewardship councils, universities, and environmental non-government organizations.

Watershed Stewardship services provided by Conservation Authorities staff include financial and hands on technical assistance to the community and landowners undertaking a variety of environmental projects. In 2006, over \$6.5 million was provided through Conservation Authority programs to landowners to undertake a range of projects including water quality improvement, forestry, habitat rehabilitation, water supply and septic management projects. The total value of these projects is estimated to be close to \$14.5 million. Additional 2006 highlights include:

- 656 water quality improvement projects were completed for 700 landowners. Conservation Authorities provided grants for these projects in the amount of \$1.6 million (total project value of \$6.6 million).
- A total of 86% of these projects were agricultural in nature and examples include watercourse fencing, cropland and streambank erosion control structures, manure management systems and equipment fuel storage/handling, nutrient management/cropland plans, permanent and fragile land retirement, as well as pond retrofits.
- Conservation Authorities undertook reforestation/ tree planting projects for 1,900 landowners planting 1.9 million trees (total project value of \$2.6 million). Forest Management Plans have been undertaken on 87,000 hectares of land (both private and Conservation Authorities land).
- 362 habitat rehabilitation/restoration projects were completed, including stream/fish habitat, riparian, wetland, wildlife, and species at risk projects, on 364 hectares and involving 230 landowners. Conservation Authorities provided grants for these projects in the amount of \$1.9 million (total project value of \$4 million).
- 512 water supply and septic management projects were completed, including decommissioning unused wells, private sewage septic and wellhead protection. Conservation Authorities provided grants of \$500,000 (total project value of \$1.2 million).

# HELPING COMMUNITIES TO ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change already affects water resources in our watersheds. Increasing temperatures create more drought conditions, more frequent severe weather, extreme rainfall leading to flood and erosion problems and lower levels in rivers, lakes, streams and groundwater sources. It is expected that we will experience reduced fisheries, reduced wetland & marsh habitats, poorer water quality and greater competition for water supplies, creating more frequent water restrictions.

Conservation Authority programs and use of watershed planning are important tools for municipalities and other levels of government to help monitor the impacts of climate change and to map out how to mitigate these effects or adapt to them.

Conservation Authorities plan and implement conservation practices on the land which help to protect water quality and supply in both surface and groundwater sources. They do this in many ways including:

- ensuring land is set aside for important areas in watersheds such as water recharge areas or sensitive wetlands;
- encouraging landowners to implement watershed stewardship practices that protect water quality through tree & shrub planting, wetland protection and restoration,
- establishment of buffer zones along shorelines to assist in preventing flooding & erosion susceptible areas



## PILOT PROJECTS PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE FARMS AND PROTECT WATER

### GREENCOVER DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Six Conservation Authorities are partnering with farmers and other agencies to demonstrate how environmental farming practices can be cost efficient and help to protect water in Ontario.

Greencover Canada is administered by the Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) on behalf of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs to support a variety of farm projects that offer environmental and economic benefits to farmers. Located on farms and in natural areas throughout Ontario, these projects will demonstrate beneficial management practices such as constructed wetlands, vegetated riparian buffer strips, shelterbelts, improved stream crossings and fencing to manage grazing and improve riparian conditions.

Conservation Authorities are leading in six and involved in eight of the 10 projects with farmers and agencies such as OSCIA, municipalities, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and Stewardship Councils.



## PROTECTING MUNICIPAL DRINKING WATER SOURCES WITH STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVES

The provincial government's new *Clean Water Act* (2006) protects municipal drinking water sources by developing local source protection plans. Conservation Authorities assist the planning process by identifying current and potential threats to water quality and quantity and then developing solutions such as stewardship practices to improve or protect these drinking water sources.

A number of watershed stewardship actions are taken today by Conservation Authorities to prevent our drinking water sources from being contaminated ensuring that it is safe and clean from source to tap. These include monitoring and managing our lakes, rivers and streams and implementing watershed agricultural and rural non farm stewardship practices such as wetland restoration & protection, planting riparian areas, woodlot management, well and septic management and land securement for sensitive water recharge areas.

## OAK RIDGES MORaine – CARING FOR THE MORaine PROJECT

Ninety percent of the Oak Ridges Moraine is privately owned. Eight Conservation Authorities are partners in the Caring for the Moraine Project which involves landowner outreach, education and implementation of private stewardship projects. The project began in 2005 and by the end of 2006 over 228,000 trees were planted on 157 hectares. Almost six hectares of wetlands were either created or enhanced. Almost 75 hectares of wetlands were protected through 10 year conservation agreements with landowners. Over eight kilometres of riparian (streamside) habitat and 16 hectares of prairie grassland were restored through this excellent example of collaboration between The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, Conservation Authorities and other organizations.

Conservation Authorities are community-based organizations that manage natural resources on a watershed basis across Ontario in partnership with landowners, and other agencies. Conservation Ontario is the umbrella organization that represents Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities.

### CONSERVATION ONTARIO

P.O Box 11, 120 Bayview Parkway, Newmarket, Ontario Canada. L3Y 4W3  
(Telephone): 905.895.0716 (Fax): 905.895.0751

[info@conservation-ontario.on.ca](mailto:info@conservation-ontario.on.ca)  
[www.conservation-ontario.ca](http://www.conservation-ontario.ca)



**Conservation  
ONTARIO**  
*Natural Champions*