



Conservation Ontario  
Annual Report 2015

Conservation  
**ONTARIO**  
*Natural Champions*

Conservation Authorities

# PARTNERS OF CHOICE



# 2015

[www.conservationontario.ca](http://www.conservationontario.ca)  
Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities

# Conservation Authorities PARTNERS OF CHOICE



Through their watershed management programs and services, Conservation Authorities provide significant added value to their many partners such as the Province, municipalities, agencies, businesses and others.

With the ability to deliver many programs province-wide, Conservation Authorities provide local watershed expertise and experience that can be leveraged for multiple outcomes such as improved and protected water quality and quantity, resilient land resources, climate change mitigation and adaptation, healthy sustainable farming and others.

The impacts of climate change we are experiencing today such as flooding, extreme heat, and drought affect not only our land and water resources, but also disrupt business, create costly household damages, and impact our own health.

As Ontario's 'on the ground' local watershed managers, Conservation Authorities see their role as key partners of choice for managing and adapting to climate change and growing the green economy. Activities such as watershed planning, monitoring, stewardship, stormwater management, and information management can contribute significantly in helping Ontario to address priorities around healthy Great Lakes, climate change mitigation and adaptation, support for agriculture and industry, sustainable growth, resilient biodiversity, and healthy people.

This annual report for 2015 outlines some of the key initiatives undertaken by Conservation Authorities and Conservation Ontario, together.



**Dick Hibma**  
CHAIR



**Kim Gavine**  
GENERAL MANAGER

## Climate Change Impacts

### Addressing More Frequent and Extreme Flooding

Conservation Authorities help the Province to specifically address the impacts of climate change through many activities including, green infrastructure, support for low impact development, stormwater management technologies, and most importantly delivery of our flood management operations.

#### In 2015:

- Conservation Ontario (CO) and Conservation Authorities (CAs) representatives, along with Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and Emergency Management Ontario staff participated in a workshop hosted by National Resources Canada (NRCan) and Public Safety Canada to work towards the development of National Floodplain Mapping Guidelines.

The four focus areas being incorporated into the development of the federal guidelines are Floodplain Mapping, Hydrology and Hydraulics, Climate change and Risk Assessment.

- CO and CAs were also invited to participate in the MOECC's development of a Low Impact Development / Stormwater Management Guidance Document in 2015.
- Conservation Ontario coordinated input from Conservation Authorities to the Province as it initiated intensive discussions on the development of its Cap and Trade Program and the development of a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.
- Conservation Ontario engaged with many other agencies and organizations in discussions and collaboration on flood management and climate change including the Ontario Climate Consortium, Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Canadian Water Resources Association, Partners for Action and Intact Centre for Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo, representatives of the Insurance Industry, Green Infrastructure Ontario and Ducks Unlimited Canada.

### Conservation Authority Floodplain Mapping Inventory

Floodplain mapping and associated information, tools and technologies provide a foundation for many business areas that Conservation Authorities undertake to support municipal, provincial and federal priorities, in addition to flood management. Conservation Ontario worked with Conservation Authority staff to finalize the collection of CA information through the CA Floodplain Mapping Inventory. The project has been led by Ganaraska Region, Otonabee Region and CO staff with financial support of MNRF.

This information updates Conservation Ontario's Flood Business Case and the development of provincial risk assessments for prioritization of projects for the National Disaster Mitigation Program (NDMP).

Current analysis from the inventory indicates that while 36,000 kms of floodplain has been mapped, close to 74 percent of the mapping needs to be updated to keep up with climate change impacts. It is currently estimated that \$136.5 million is needed to update the mapping.

### Critical Infrastructure: Protecting People and Property from Natural Hazards

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) funding program is designed to ensure that major maintenance projects are undertaken on aging infrastructure. This infrastructure was built to protect lives and property from natural hazards such as flooding, erosion and unstable slopes and is managed by Ontario's Conservation Authorities. In 2015, 157 funding applications were submitted by 28 Conservation Authorities which were valued at a total cost of \$14.1 million. With only \$10 million available (50% provincial/50% local) to invest into protection of life and property, a total of 103 projects from 23 Conservation Authorities were funded in 2015/2016.





## Source Water Protection is Important for Healthy Watersheds, Great Lakes and Addressing Climate Change Impacts

Conservation Authorities continued to play a vital role in the development of local Source Protection Plans (SPPs) through 2015. As of December 2015, the Province has approved all 22 SPPs across the province.

This is a significant milestone in the history of the Drinking Water Source Protection (DWSP) Program. The SPPs contain policies that protect our sources of municipal drinking water, enhance the health of our watersheds and Great Lakes, and help address climate change impacts.

We are in the policy implementation phase by various organizations including municipalities, Conservation Authorities and the Province. Also, drinking water systems of three First Nations – Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point, Rama First Nation and Six Nations of the Grand – have been included in the source protection planning process.



### Throughout 2015, Conservation Authorities provided several benefits including:

- Technical studies
- Policy development and interpretation
- Building increased local buy-in
- Engaging First Nations
- Implementation resource sharing and problem solving
- Local education and outreach materials
- Risk Management Services or assistance to municipalities

### Identifying the Source Water Protection Needs

Conservation Ontario (CO) strongly supports the DWSP program at Conservation Authorities across Ontario with benefits to other implementing bodies as well. CO is a member of the Joint Advisory Committee which reviews DWSP workplans and provides long-term strategic planning for the program. Conservation Ontario maintains a living document of DWSP program and technical framework gaps and needs, and SPP implementation needs including those of Risk Management Officials. The document includes information from Project Managers at Conservation Authorities, and from municipalities.



## Great Lakes Great Partnerships

Conservation Ontario strives to influence discussions of effective water management in the Great Lakes basin and hopes that shared resources will lead to more effective outcomes for Great Lakes protection. As a member of the binational Great Lakes Executive Committee, in 2015 Conservation Ontario actively participated on the following Annexes of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement with a view to contributing to the achievement of these binational commitments:

- ✓ Lake Action Management Plans and a Nearshore Framework (due 2016);
- ✓ Nutrient Management and Phosphorous Objectives for Lake Erie (due 2016);
- ✓ Groundwater (Science Report completed in 2015 for public review);
- ✓ Climate Change
- ✓ Science

Conservation Authorities expect to continue to contribute to ‘on the ground actions’ in support of these annexes and additional binational commitments around habitat and invasive species.

Conservation Ontario looks forward to implementation of the Great Lakes Protection Act which was passed in November 2015. Highlights of activities in 2015 in support of the proposed legislation include: attendance at the Minister’s announcement of the Proposed Great Lakes Protection Act, organization of a webinar for Conservation Authorities on the draft legislation, and a presentation to the Standing Committee in early Fall.





## How Do Conservation Authorities Protect Ecosystems?

- ✓ Address upstream activities for downstream benefits through watershed planning
- ✓ Protect water quality and supplies by working with landowners and others to deliver watershed stewardship activities that protect water and land
- ✓ Protect drinking water sources
- ✓ Monitor conditions
- ✓ Implement programs that adapt to climate change impacts
- ✓ Purchase important lands
- ✓ Provide technical support for land use planning
- ✓ Develop subwatershed plans and regulate activities on the land to balance development and protect sustainability of ecosystems
- ✓ Support farming viability
- ✓ Enable people to experience and learn about nature

## 2015 Provincial Plan Review

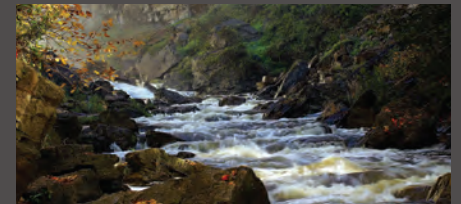
### Conservation Authority Watershed Programs Support Provincial Priorities

Four key provincial plans that protect and manage the impacts of growth in south central Ontario were reviewed in 2015 by the public and an Advisory Panel headed by David Crombie. The Panel made a total of 87 recommendations to the Provincial Government around the Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The recommendations provide a framework to accommodate population and employment growth in a more sustainable manner, curbing urban sprawl and protecting productive farmland.

Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities help to implement provincial objectives around these plans through their many programs and services provided using an integrated watershed management approach. The role of Conservation Authorities is recognized in the Panel report and recommendations.

Eighteen Conservation Authorities specifically deliver programs and activities that help the Province and municipalities to reach the important environmental objectives of these plans.

These provincial plans strive to protect important ecosystems that are needed for a healthy environment, economy, and for our own well-being.



## Partnering for Improvements that Streamline Regulatory-related Activities by Conservation Authorities

Within Conservation Ontario, there is a shared commitment to improve information sharing and networking among Conservation Authorities, to increase transparency and accountability of activities affecting client groups, and to develop templates and guidelines for greater consistency. This commitment was manifested in a number of projects including:

- Conservation Ontario hosted a Section 28 Regulations workshop in March 2015 on the 2008 "Draft Guidelines to Support Conservation Authority Administration of the Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Regulation".

35/36 Conservation Authorities registered and a total of 75 Conservation Authority staff participated either in person or by webinar. Further to this workshop, work is underway to update the 2008 Guidelines.

- Conservation Ontario undertook surveys and held a workshop to develop a draft Agricultural Guide to CA Permits (to be finalized in 2016). This work was undertaken collaboratively with the agriculture community and with funding support from the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation.

- Conservation Ontario hosted webinars whereby key stakeholders were invited to share their perspectives with a Conservation Authority audience, including:

Drainage Superintendents Association of Ontario/roles and responsibilities of a Drainage Superintendent

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs/Drainage Act and Section 28 Regulations Protocol Training

Fisheries and Oceans Canada/Drain Mapping

- Conservation Authorities benefited from Fisheries Act training hosted by Conservation Ontario and conducted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.





# Healthy Watersheds and People - Ecohealth

Ecohealth is about the relationship between human and environmental health. It's understanding how our activities impact the environment and also realizing just how much we rely on nature for many benefits and how it can directly improve our own individual mental and physical health.

In 2015, recognizing the important connection between healthy people and their environment, Conservation Ontario helped Forests Ontario and other agencies to establish a new collaborative – EcoHealth Ontario.

Funded for two years by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the goals of EcoHealth Ontario are to raise awareness of the public health benefits of a healthy environment, build a shared vision of 'ecohealth' among watershed practitioners, planners, public health and others; influence provincial and other policies across multiple sectors to incorporate ecohealth considerations; and share information, research and outreach tools in order to 'talk' about ecohealth.

The collaborative is focused on Green Spaces – specifically the physical and mental health benefits that they provide. This is very important to Conservation Authorities who own and manage over 500 conservation areas, many which are available for public use.

## In 2015, Conservation Ontario:

- Sponsored and helped coordinate the **Health Benefits of Green Spaces Workshop (March 2015)**. Funded mainly by the Greenbelt Foundation with assistance from partners such as Conservation Ontario and others, this workshop attracted just under 100 people from municipalities, public health sector, conservation authorities, government, and education. The purpose was to profile the links between healthy environment & people; share recent research on the benefits of green spaces; identify challenges and needs to link the two in public health, planning, parks, and environmental fields; and flush out activities that could enhance the public health benefits of green spaces.
- Coordinated a **five session webcast on Ecohealth issues and topics** at the 2015 Latorell Conservation Symposium
- Supported Conservation Authorities to host a **2015 Healthy Hikes Challenge**
- Worked with the collaborative to develop **messaging** that promotes awareness of ecohealth
- Promoted the results of two research studies:
  - a) **Urban green space, health and well-being: A review** (2015 Toronto Public Health) examines the characteristics of green space that support health and identifies ways to maximize the health benefits of green space.
  - b) **The impact of green space on heat and air pollution in urban communities** (Feb 2015: David Suzuki Foundation) investigates how the natural environment influences climate-related health impacts and air quality.



## Step Into Nature Through Healthy Hikes

Conservation Ontario hosted the 2015 Healthy Hikes Challenge from May 1 – October 31. Overall, 213 individuals registered and 195 participated in our Challenge to #StepIntoNature by incorporating nature into their fitness routines. In order to be eligible for prizes, people registered at [www.healthyhikes.ca](http://www.healthyhikes.ca) and then tracked their participation by recording the number of hours spent hiking/walking at Conservation Areas and/or attending Healthy Hikes.

Partners on this project included Conservation Authorities, Forests Ontario, Bruce Trail Conservancy, York Region, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Hike Ontario, Canadian Mental health Association-ON, LEAF, Traversing, Ontario Trails Council and Ontario Headwaters Institute.





# LATORNELL

CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM

## 2015 Latornell Conservation Symposium

### Weathering Change: Navigating a New Climate

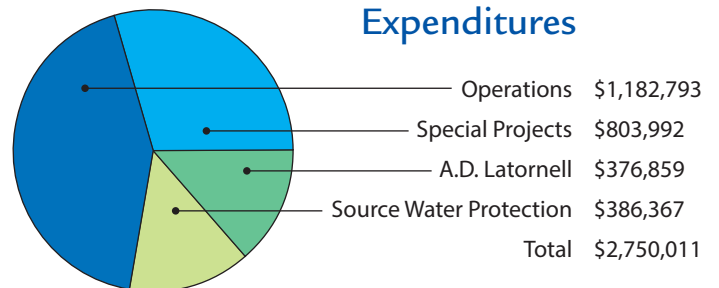
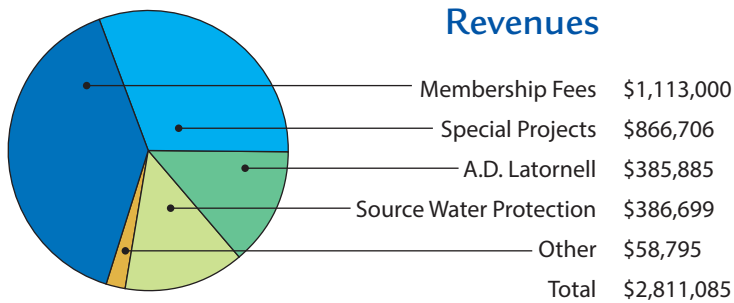
There is no longer a debate about whether or not climate change is happening but rather what actions we can take to navigate the new 'normal'. The 2015 Latornell Conservation Symposium explored the impacts of climate that we are seeing in Ontario's watersheds as well as current and emerging best management practices that can be used to build environmental, economic and social resilience.

Just under 1,000 people attended the 2015 event which featured keynote speakers; Blair Feltmate (University of Waterloo), explorer James Raffan, economist Lapo Calami from the Insurance Bureau of Canada, and well known environmentalist Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org. RBC Foundation and RBC Blue Water Project were key sponsors of the 2015 event, along with the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

Four individuals were recognized for their leadership role in Ontario's conservation community. They included: Muriel Andreae (London), Ian Buchanan (Newmarket), Tom Prout (Exeter) and Bob Rogers (Sudbury).

A new feature at this year's event was a webcast of five sessions around Ecohealth topics. Participants were able to join the Symposium and watch the presentations online.

## 2015 Financial Information



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Let's Chat!

