



Conservation
ONTARIO
Natural Champions

Conservation Ontario
Annual Report 2014

Risk to Resiliency

Conservation Authority Programs
Benefit Ontario Watersheds



2014

www.conservationontario.ca

Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities



From Risk to Resiliency

Climate change, population growth and changing land uses are impacting watersheds and their communities across Ontario. Increasing extreme weather events, flooding, heat waves, air pollution and decreasing water quality and supplies are unfortunate byproducts of our industrious lives that can risk our health, our homes and our livelihoods.

Moving from risk to resiliency isn't done overnight – it requires ongoing commitment and investments from many sectors. And, as conditions change and our lives collide more closely with our natural world, it requires us to develop new approaches and relationships.

Adapting to changing conditions long-term requires resilient water and land resources that can reduce flooding, absorb carbon emissions, provide safe drinking water, support healthy farms, and continue to contribute to a more sustainable economy. Throughout 2014, Conservation Ontario continued to support and advance the work of Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities across many program areas including source protection, flood management, Great Lakes, and other policy areas.

Over the past year, Conservation Ontario helped to implement the Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Program (ODWSP), reducing risks to municipal drinking water sources. Conservation Ontario also published a study on the co-benefits of this program confirming that source protection activities significantly contribute to building overall watershed resiliency across Ontario. The work being done within this program has enabled us to identify issues within local conditions, build new science, and develop local water budgets to achieve shared benefits in two key provincial policy areas: Great Lakes and climate change adaptation.



Dick Hibma
CHAIR



Kim Gavine
GENERAL MANAGER

Moving from risk to resiliency isn't done overnight – it requires ongoing commitment and investments from many sectors. And, as conditions change and our lives collide more closely with our natural world, it requires us to develop new approaches and relationships. Addressing flood management issues, for example, has led Conservation Authorities to work more closely with the insurance industry and others to explore how to address significant gaps in floodplain mapping.

In 2014, Conservation Ontario was also active in establishing a new coalition among Conservation Authorities, the public health sector, planners, and the environmental community. EcoHealth Ontario strives to implement activities that build and share a vision that recognizes the connections between a healthy environment and the people who live there.

2014 Latornell Symposium

Addressed Growth and Transformation

"Growth and Transformation" was the theme of the 2014 Latornell Conservation Symposium held November 18-20th at the Nottawasaga Inn Resort and Conference Centre in Alliston, Ontario. The Symposium attracted just over 900 delegates and featured 230 speakers in 72 sessions.

Keynote speakers for this event included Adam Kahane, Chairman of REOS North America who spoke on solving tough problems through change and transformation. Discovery Channel host Ziya Tong also presented, along with David Miller, President and CEO of World Wildlife Fund.

Recipients of the 2014 Latornell Leadership Awards included: Lorrie Minshall, Judi Brouse, and Debbe Crandall.



Harnessing Information

CAMaps.ca

Eleven Conservation Authorities and the Source Water Protection program continue to maintain CAMaps.ca, which is a centralized online map portal for Conservation Authority information. In 2014, a CAMaps user group was formed to give CA staff a vehicle to promote closer connections and information sharing between the CAMaps members. An online Wiki and discussion forum were also developed to provide CA staff guidance and an opportunity to share best practices for the benefit of the user community.

CA Statistical Survey

Conservation Ontario worked with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to create a new, online survey application for the purpose of collecting the annual statistical information from the Conservation Authorities. This tool replaces the previous annual Conservation Authority Survey and will be available for use in 2015.



Dodging the Perfect Storm

Conservation Ontario's Flood Business Case

In 2014, Conservation Ontario and the Conservation Authorities continued to advance a Business Case for strategic reinvestment in Ontario's flood management programs, services and structures.

- Conservation Ontario established strategic and technical working committees to assess the issues and provide guidance on advancing the Business Case
- Conservation Ontario and the Conservation Authorities engaged in discussions and built new partnerships around flood management with the Province, Federal government (Public Safety Canada) and the insurance industry to determine how best to address these funding gaps and issues within Ontario's flood management programs.

A provincially sponsored Floodplain Mapping Assessment Project, currently underway and being led by Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority and Otonabee Conservation staff with assistance from Conservation Ontario, will document the status of large scale geospatial data and hydrology/hydraulic models for all Conservation Authorities to support the development of a floodplain mapping strategy proposed in the Business Case

Gaps and deficiencies in Conservation Authority flood programs and services that have been identified include:

- a. Outdated Floodplain Mapping**
- b. Aging Flood Infrastructure / Lack of Asset Management Planning**
- c. Accumulative funding shortfalls for flood management operations within Conservation Authorities**

Supporting Delivery of Conservation Authority Planning & Regulations

Conservation Authorities have a shared commitment to improve information sharing and networking, to increase transparency and accountability of activities affecting client groups, and to develop templates and guidelines for greater consistency.

With a focus on consistency, professionalism, and good customer service, Conservation Ontario has provided technical support to the front-line staff in our watersheds who are responsible for regulatory compliance.

- In 2014:
- A five day, Level 1 training course for Provincial Offences Officers was delivered for 26 Conservation Authority staff with funding support from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.
 - Conservation Ontario hosted a Planning & Regulations Best Management Practices (BMPs) Day where staff from 33 Conservation Authorities met to discuss their implementation of the *Policies and Procedures for Conservation Authority Plan Review and Permitting Activities* (MNR, 2010).
 - Conservation Ontario began hosting a series of webinars whereby key stakeholders were invited to share their perspectives/ research with a Conservation Authority audience. 2014 spotlighted the Ontario Federation of Agriculture/natural heritage, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs/agricultural drains, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport/cultural heritage, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)/self-assessment process. Other key topics were addressed including: Aboriginal Consultation and Director's Liability, Responsibilities and Section 28 Hearings.



Protecting Fish and Fish Habitat

In 2014, Conservation Ontario and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is consistent with the new Federal Fisheries Protection Program and acknowledges the role of Conservation Authorities in aquatic resource protection.

Partnerships Leverage Resources for Shared Outcomes

Throughout 2014 Conservation Ontario and Conservation Authorities developed and maintained partnerships with organizations and stakeholders to advance key business priorities.

- Forests Ontario continued to be a key partner in Conservation Authority tree planting efforts to sequester carbon; enhance and diversify southern Ontario's landscape; increase adaptive capacity to withstand climate change; moderate local climate by providing shade, moderating temperature extremes and reducing the effects of storms.
- Conservation Ontario and the Conservation Authorities also collaborated with partners like Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Stewardship Network of Ontario, Ontario Network for Ecosystem Services, Green Infrastructure Ontario and a number of Agricultural Stakeholders like the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association and Farm and Food Care; other government and non government agencies
- In 2014, Conservation Ontario and Conservation Authorities engaged with a number of new partners around climate change and flooding issues. These included the University of Waterloo, Ontario Climate Change Consortium and representatives of the insurance industry. Work was focused on flood risk data and mapping and to further understanding of common interest in advancing flood resiliency.



Source Protection Work is Important for Healthy Watersheds

Conservation Authorities continued to play a key role in technical studies and the development of local Source Protection Plans (SPPs) through 2014. These plans contain policies that will protect our sources of municipal drinking water. Approximately half of the 22 SPPs across the province are now approved, with implementation of the policies by various organizations including Conservation Authorities.

Throughout 2014, Conservation Authorities provided several benefits including:

- ✓ technical and policy development and interpretation,
- ✓ building increased local buy-in,
- ✓ implementation resource sharing and problem solving,
- ✓ local education and outreach materials and
- ✓ Risk Management Services or assistance to set up the same for municipalities.

Conservation Ontario strongly supported the Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection (ODWSP) Program at Conservation Authorities across Ontario with benefits to other implementing bodies as well.

Conservation Ontario continued as a member of the Joint Advisory Committee which reviews ODWSP workplans and provides long-term strategic planning for the program.

Identifying the Source Protection Needs of Conservation Authorities

In December 2014, Conservation Ontario produced a report: 'Source Protection Implementation Needs, Priorities and Gaps' which summarizes the immense value that Conservation Authorities bring to the ODWSP Program, determines SPP implementation needs, and identifies concerns and program gaps. The report includes information from Project Managers at Conservation Authorities, and from municipalities. The report was used by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and Conservation Authorities in program planning for the next fiscal year.

Co-Benefits of the Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Program

In April 2014, Conservation Ontario published a report: 'Identification of the Co-benefits between Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Programs and Conservation Authority Business and Program' which summarizes ODWSP Program benefits across Ontario watersheds. The program has resulted in significantly increased staff expertise and capacity at Conservation Authorities.

The technical tools, scientific studies, water budgets, and communications activities benefit Conservation Authority operations in a number of other programs, many of which they deliver in partnership or on behalf of the Province and municipalities. These include regulatory programs, plan reviews, watershed stewardship projects, refined low water forecasting, flood modeling and forecasting, improved climate change impact assessment, development of local watershed report cards, and new municipal and provincial partnerships.

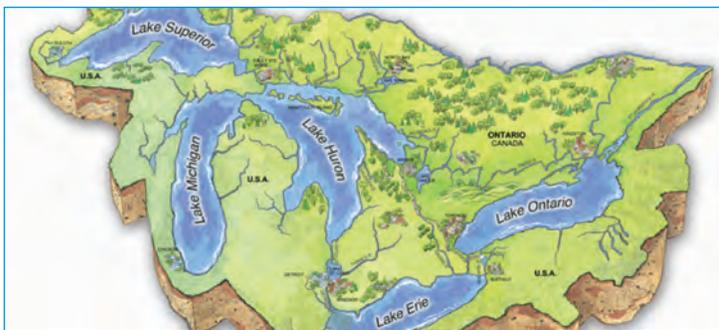


Building Resiliency in Great Lakes Watersheds

Throughout 2014, Conservation Ontario continued to support the Conservation Authority watershed management efforts which protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

New Interactive Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Education Tool

With funding support from the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, Conservation Ontario finalized a web-based tool to communicate the relationship between conditions in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and common activities that take place in the Basin.



This online interactive Great Lakes – St. Lawrence map provides information on the benefits and stressors on these important natural resources, as well as actions that can be taken to improve or protect conditions. It also looks at the relationship between the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and their watersheds, focusing on the water cycle. The tool can be found on Conservation Ontario's website: <http://www.conservationontario.ca/what-we-do/great-lakes/learn-about-the-great-lakes>

Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA)

As a member of the bi-national Great Lakes Executive Committee, in 2014 Conservation Ontario actively participated on a number of Annexes of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement with a view to contributing to the achievement of these bi-national commitments: Lake Action Management Plans and a Nearshore Framework (due 2016); Nutrient Management and Phosphorous Objectives for Lake Erie (due 2016); Groundwater (Science Report due 2015); Climate Change and Science.

Conservation Authorities expect to continue to contribute to 'on the ground actions' in support of these annexes and additional bi-national commitments around habitat and species and invasive species. Overall, 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.

Canada – Ontario Agreement (COA)

Finally, in 2014, Conservation Ontario provided input to the eighth Canada- Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health (signed in December 2014) and to the Study on Great Lakes Water Quality (May 2014) of the Federal Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainability.

Critical Infrastructure: Protecting People and Property from Natural Hazards

The 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. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), the 2014 WECI committee consisting of staff from the MNRF, Conservation Ontario and a number of Conservation Authorities established an asset management planning subcommittee and initiated

enhancements to the WECI database to better manage these assets and to support forecasting of WECI-eligible project costs. In 2014, the committee reviewed over 138 applications for funding from 29 Conservation Authorities which were valued at a total cost of \$14.6 million. A total of 104 projects from 25 Conservation Authorities were funded through the 2014/2015 total investment of \$10 million dollars into protection of life and property. This represents \$5 million in provincial funding with matching local investment.





Step Into Nature

Step Into Nature Through Healthy Hikes

Conservation Ontario's 2014 Healthy Hikes Ontario-wide campaign encouraged Ontarians to visit Conservation Areas to boost their physical and mental health and learn about connections between healthy people and ecosystems. The campaign provided a challenge to encourage participants to log their time spent hiking or walking in a Conservation Area online for a chance to win prizes. A total of 200 new registrants joined the challenge.

- There were nearly 200 events registered in the Healthy Hikes events calendar hosted by 15 Conservation Authorities and three campaign partners (Forests Ontario, LEAF and York Region) and many additional Conservation Authorities supported the campaign by promoting it locally.

Mood Walks Can Be Life Changing

In 2014 Conservation Ontario also partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario Division to support their Mood Walks program. This special initiative provided training and support for community mental health organizations across Ontario to launch educational walking programs for people who experience mental health issues.

- 22 walking groups were formed across the province with a total of 231 participants and led by staff from local mental health agencies.
- Almost half of the walks took place in Ontario's Conservation Areas, and in some watersheds Conservation Authority staff assisted in helping lead hikes.

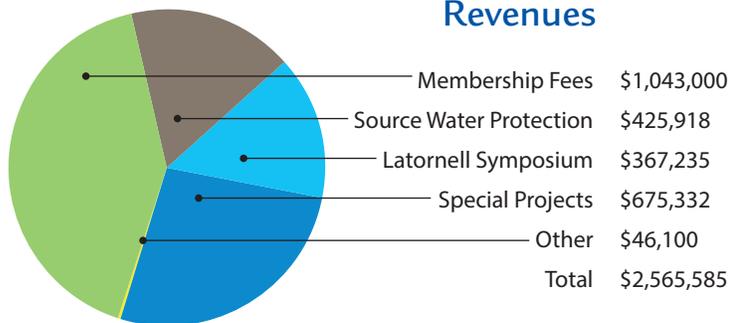
Participants reported significant positive changes in both their overall mental health as well as their knowledge of local hiking trails and parks.

"The Step Into Nature Healthy Hikes Challenge provided me with the guidance, resources, and motivation to take up hiking as a new pursuit. It quickly became a new passion of mine... I incorporated our weekly hikes into my routine and it was life-changing. During the challenge, I noticed that my physical health improved, my moods became more positive, and my outlook on nature was transformed. I learned to appreciate the importance of being grounded and the peacefulness and tranquility that this could bring. I also came to realize that Ontario has some wonderful parks, trails, and conservation areas to experience and explore."

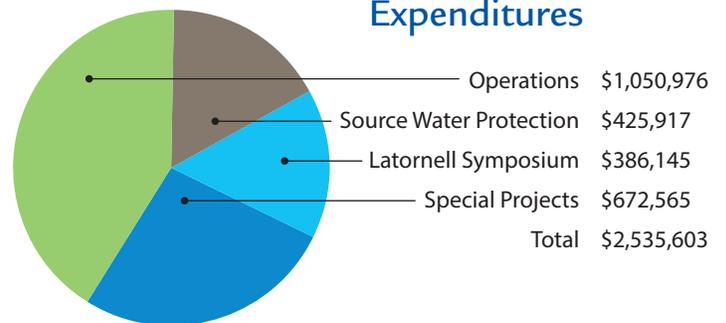
Winner of the Step Into Nature Healthy Hikes Challenge

2014 Financial Information

Revenues



Expenditures



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Let's Chat!

