



Conservation Ontario
Annual Report 2013

Conservation
ONTARIO
Natural Champions



Driving Innovation

Conservation Authorities: Leaders in Watershed Management



2013

www.conservationontario.ca
Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities

Driving Innovation

Conservation Authorities Develop Innovative, Practical Solutions to Address Growing Problems

Conservation Authorities and their municipal partners are often on the frontlines when addressing the costly impacts of climate change and rapid population growth. We struggle with maintaining water quality and supply, reducing the impacts from more frequent flooding, and building resilience into important ecosystems which are critical for helping us to adapt to higher temperatures and more frequent extreme weather.

The solutions to these growing challenges lie within the Conservation Authorities' ability to work with partners to leverage resources and adapt programs, identify new technologies, and develop innovative, practical solutions to continue to build local watershed resilience.

Ontario's water and land resources, and natural systems provide important ecological, economic and social benefits. Forests, lakes, rivers and other water resources, wetlands, soils, plants and wildlife are necessary to produce goods and services we rely on every day such as clean and sustainable water supplies, clean air, food, fuel, and energy. They drive Ontario's economy and help us to adapt to climate change.

A Green Economy is taking root in Ontario bringing more sustainable practices such as stormwater management, low impact

development, green infrastructure, and clean technologies - all of which help us to address the issues and continue to grow our economy within the limitations of our natural world. In 2013, we developed a Green Economy Roadmap for Conservation Authorities. This report looks for innovative ways to build efficiencies, use fewer natural resources and reduce the amount of waste we produce - in our offices and throughout Conservation Authority programs. We are designing more sustainable ways to work.

As well, throughout 2013 we saw several examples of the serious impact of flooding on people and communities in Calgary and Toronto. The loss of life, devastation, long-term social and economic disruption and the staggering clean up costs in the aftermath of these flood events clearly demonstrates how essential it is to develop more holistic solutions that address the impacts and prevent them from happening in the first place.

Working with Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities, Conservation Ontario developed a Flood Business Case called "Dodging the Perfect Storm: Conservation Ontario's Business Case for Strategic Investment in Ontario's Flood Management Programs, Services and Structures". Reducing the impacts of more frequent flooding requires

a combination of developing new working relationships between conservation authorities and all levels of government, updated tools, and better resourced flood management programs. We also need to explore asset management strategies and ensure ongoing program support for emerging technologies and practices which reduce runoff, improve water quality, protect important natural heritage, protect water supply, and build watershed resilience.

We continue to talk with all levels of government, industry, other agencies and even landowners to promote a more integrated and holistic approach to building and implementing innovative solutions to problems threatening our important natural resources.



Dick Hibma
Chair




Kim Gavine
General Manager

CONSERVATION AREAS & OUTDOOR RECREATION

Available Activities Include




270+
Conservation Areas


6,800,000
Visitors in 2011


2,500 km
of Trails Owned and Operated

CALORIES
Burned on an Hour Long Hike
435 (*average for 153 lb female)



Watershed Checkup

A total of 29 Conservation Authorities launched a watershed report card in 2013. These report cards provide important and relevant information on local watershed conditions around surface water quality (rivers, lakes, streams), forest conditions, and groundwater quality. These are the first report cards of this kind launched in Ontario.

Generally, in the most populated areas of southern Ontario, the watershed report cards have revealed conditions primarily at the C and D levels – mainly in surface water quality and forest conditions. Groundwater conditions are generally As and Bs.

Some As and Bs, in watersheds with less development need to continue to be protected because of the multiple benefits they provide.

The watershed report cards provide a practical analysis of local conditions, explaining why these conditions exist, pointing out current activities underway to address conditions and suggesting additional activities that could be implemented to improve conditions. By doing so, the watershed report cards directly link human activities to watershed conditions, a first step in helping people to see their role and responsibilities in protecting water and land resources.

A new website was developed to feature the report cards and all the additional information on the benefits of healthy watersheds – www.watershedcheckup.ca. Additional report cards continue to be produced by the remainder of the Conservation Authorities. All Conservation Authorities will continue to refine and improve monitoring and reporting methods prior to launching a second set of report cards within five years (2018).



Streamlining Regulatory Activities by Conservation Authorities

Under Section 28 Regulations of the Conservation Authorities Act, Conservation Authorities regulate development and activities in or adjacent to river or stream valleys, Great Lakes, large inland lakes shorelines, watercourses, hazardous lands and wetlands in order to protect peoples' lives and property from natural hazards and to maintain the vitality of our watersheds. Further to a provincial review and amendment process, and in conformity with the Content Regulation (approved by the Province in March 2011), all 36 amended regulations were approved by the Minister in February of 2013 and will assist in providing timely review of applications. In 2013, Conservation Ontario continued participation on the multi-agency Drainage Act & Section 28 Regulations Team (DART) in support of a protocol to ensure coordination of legislative

requirements. Conservation Ontario participated in delivery of provincial training in January that was provided to Conservation Authority staff and drainage superintendents.

In 2013, Conservation Ontario and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) worked towards a possible Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would be consistent with the new Federal Fisheries Protection Program and would build upon a strong partnership history. This work was undertaken in anticipation of the existing partnership agreements not being consistent with the new program direction. Development of a MOU is ongoing in 2014 as program details are being clarified. As a result of the anticipated amendments to the Fisheries Act being enacted on November 25, 2013, Conservation

Authorities no longer provide regulatory review for works under the federal Fisheries Act and the partnership agreements between DFO and Conservation Authorities are no longer in effect. Notwithstanding development of an MOU, Conservation Authorities may still continue to undertake advisory reviews involving fisheries and aquatic resources under provincial legislation.

Finally, consultation on proposed amendments to Conservation Ontario's Class Environmental Assessment for Remedial Flood and Erosion Control Projects was finalized in early 2013 and the Minister of the Environment approved them in July 2013. These minor amendments were proposed as part of its five year review process to ensure that the Class EA remains current and relevant.



Step Into Nature Healthy Hikes

The Healthy Hikes 2013 Campaign

Research shows that we can drastically improve both our mental and physical health by getting outside more, being active or just visiting nature. To help more people do so, Conservation Ontario and the Conservation Authorities hosted the first ever Healthy Hikes Ontario-wide campaign in 2013. The goal was to encourage more Ontarians to visit Conservation Areas to boost their physical and mental health as well as learn about connections between healthy people and healthy ecosystems through a new Healthy Hikes website.

Nine provincial level partners from both the health and environmental sector joined the campaign including: the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), The Bruce Trail Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, York Region Public Health, Trees Ontario (now Forests Ontario), Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests, Ontario Trails Council, David Suzuki Foundation, and Trail Swag.

The campaign challenged participants to log their time spent hiking or walking in a Conservation Area online for a chance to win prizes. Popular outdoor merchandising company, Merrell, provided a \$1,200 gift certificate grand prize.

- 439 participants signed up for the campaign and actively logged their hikes through the website
- Average age of the participants was 57 with a 3:1 ratio for females
- Just over 55,000 people visited the Healthy Hikes website which profiled the environmental and public health benefits of CA programs and projects. This new website received over 32,536 page views in six months
- There were over 220 events registered in the Healthy Hikes calendar between May- October; three partners also hosted events
- The Healthy Hikes Facebook page had nearly 130 users, and the campaign was profiled on Twitter from Conservation Authorities, our partners, and participants

This successful project will continue into 2014.



Source Protection

Continued Transition to Implementation

Source protection plan approvals began in 2013 and Conservation Ontario (CO) will continue to assist Conservation Authorities (CAs) in resolving issues that may arise out of the review process. In 2013, CO focused on supporting CAs in the transition to plan implementation by:

- supporting negotiation of CA responsibilities within source protection regions;
- facilitating discussion with the Province on implementation issues;
- supporting the management of Source Water Protection data and information through the development of standards and guidelines for data maintenance, development of information exchange protocols, data transfer to the province, etc.;
- facilitating the development of standards and processes for annual report;
- providing opportunities for CA staff to collaborate via regular working group meetings, and;
- coordinating the development of support materials for plan implementation such as guidance documents, communication products, etc.

MONITORING THE HEALTH OF OUR WATERSHEDS

489
GROUNDWATER
MONITORING
SITES

1,129
SURFACE WATER
MONITORING
SITES

Healthy land and water resources ensure safe drinking water and resilient forests, wetlands and wildlife

1,117
BENTHIC
MONITORING
SITES

Status of Source Protection Plans (2013)

Proposed Source Protection Plans (SPP) for all 38 Source Protection Areas were completed in 2013, and submitted to the Ministry of Environment for approval. Lakehead Region Conservation Authority's proposed SPP was approved in early 2013. It is expected that all plan approvals will be completed by end of 2015. CO continues to work with Conservation Authorities and the Province to resolve any issues that arise during the review process.

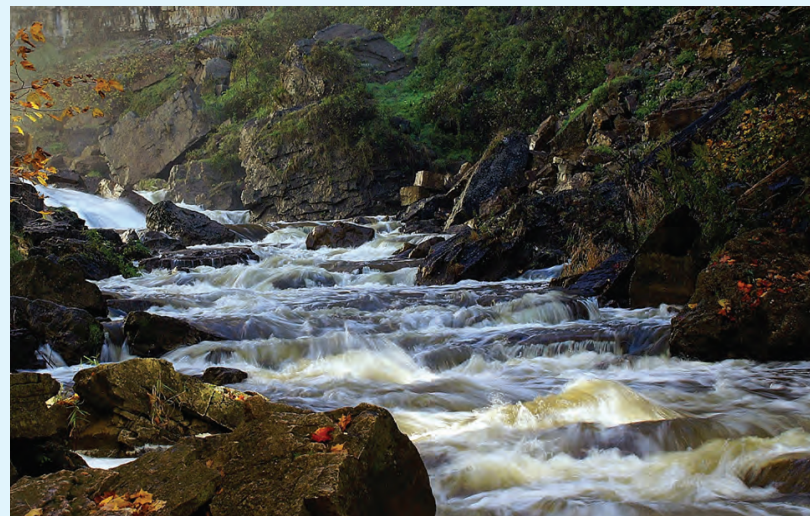
- In spring 2013, the Province announced that \$13.5 million would be made available as the Source Protection Municipal Implementation Fund to offset a portion of SWP implementation costs for small, rural municipalities. This multi-year program offers one-time funding over the December 2013 - December 2015 period.
- Conservation Ontario began releasing the Implementation Resource Guide modules, and created a members' site where the modules can be accessed, along with other implementation resources.
- Conservation Ontario developed the Risk Management Office (RMO) Responsibilities Map and Section 55 Options Table as a means to track, and report on, the detailed status of Part IV delegation agreements between SPAs and municipalities. These two products will be updated regularly, and circulated to SPAs as needed.
- Conservation Ontario continued to develop targeted SWP education and outreach materials for local communities to assist with understanding source protection plan policies. A real estate factsheet is under development for CAs to inform realtors and home owners of vulnerable areas and associated source protection policies. A SWP photo library is being developed to support CAs with the creation of various communications products.

Information Management

/ Information Technology

Conservation Ontario staff continued to work with Conservation Authorities and the Ministry of the Environment to complete the quality control review of the Assessment Report Database, and facilitate the transfer of information to the Province. Conservation Ontario conducted a QA/QC analysis on the provincial Assessment Report Database and continued to support the management of SWP data and information through the communication of standards and guidelines for data maintenance, development of information exchange protocols, and support for data transfer to the Province.

Work began on the implementation of an updated Drinking Water Threats Database to capture the data collected as part of the threat verification process. At the same time, Conservation Ontario and the Conservation Authorities began to revise and simplify the Assessment Report database.





Conservation Authority Green Economy Roadmap

The Green Economy is the development of new and emerging renewable and energy efficient technologies, and other business strategies and collaborations that enable us to live more sustainable lifestyles while growing economically within the capacity of our natural world.

In 2013, Conservation Ontario and the Conservation Authorities finalized the Green Economy Roadmap for Conservation Authorities in Ontario. This Roadmap identifies the focus areas, assets, actions and partnerships that Conservation Authorities need to pursue in order to participate in the transition to a greener economy. With this guidance document, Conservation Authorities are able to identify and prioritize green economy initiatives, tools, and steps required to operate more sustainably.

The Green Economy Roadmap identifies a range of current and emerging business opportunities across key Conservation Authority priorities including climate change, Great Lakes and integrated watershed management. A series of environmental, economic and social outcomes are also identified.

Focus Areas for Conservation Authorities to pursue:

1. Re-thinking Conservation Authority current programs and business activities

Opportunities exist around land management, renewable energy, forest management, and water management

2. 'Greening' Conservation Authority operations

Reducing water and material consumption, energy efficiency upgrades, use of renewable energy options

3. Innovative land and resource management

Applying new and innovative approaches to managing land and watershed resources more efficiently through activities such as collaborations

4. Measurement and monitoring

Conservation Authorities are well positioned with long standing partnerships in data collection, with a variety of partners, to play a key role in the development, measurement, monitoring, and reporting of data and metrics around biodiversity, water and other resources

5. Promoting and facilitating collaboration

Leading the facilitation of new collaborations with partners not typically involved in their business but relying on healthy natural resources for their own priorities; also promoting greater leveraging of fewer financial and human resources

6. Health and the environment

Showing the connections between human health and environmental health; facilitating new partnerships and leveraging resources with public health sector

7. Environmental marketing, communication, education and outreach

Leverage and share successful Conservation Authority outreach and environmental marketing, communication, and education activities with other partners

Benefits to Conservation Authorities of moving to a greener economy:

- Lower operational costs
- Smaller environmental footprint - use of fewer resources and creating less waste
- Less carbon / greenhouse emissions
- More sustainable and smarter water and land resource use
- New sources of revenue and business partnerships



Conservation Ontario continues to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring that the protection of the Great Lakes is supported by our watershed management efforts. With a view to Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy Goal #1 to engage and empower communities, with funding support from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation Ontario held a workshop for Conservation Authority staff who work directly in stewardship, education, communications, and foundation programs. Information and messaging linking watershed actions to Great Lakes - St. Lawrence benefits was shared and new ways to increase or leverage the impact were identified; products will be finalized in 2014. As well, Conservation Ontario continued to encourage collaborations in support of the provincial Strategy with regard to research, monitoring, accessible information, provincial guidance on low impact development techniques for stormwater management, and implementation of Great Lakes Guardian Fund projects and stewardship assistance programs.



As a member of the Great Lakes Executive Committee, in 2013 Conservation Ontario committed staff to contribute to the achievement of binational commitments by participating on the following Annexes of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement : 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 binational commitments around habitat and species and invasive species. Overall, Conservation Ontario hopes that collaboration between all levels of government and watershed management agencies to share resources will lead to more effective outcomes for Great Lakes protection.

Finally, CO made presentations to the International Joint Commission about water level regulations for Lake Ontario and promotion of an Adaptive Management Plan for dealing with impacts from extreme water levels and we supported the Great Lakes Protection Act before the Standing Committee.

2013



LATORNELL
CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM

Resiliency - the Ability to Adapt

The Latornell Conservation Symposium marked its 20th anniversary in 2013 and celebrated by modernizing its look and name for this popular event - two recommendations that came out of a year-long strategic review undertaken by the steering committee. This review included a survey of delegates and others plus two focus groups, and a scan of conference trends and current Symposium demographics.

As a result, moving forward, the Latornell Conservation Symposium will continue to focus on learning, provide good networking opportunities, incorporate more and emerging technologies, and ensure delegates enjoy themselves as well as learn.

The theme of the 2013 Symposium was Resilience: the Ability to Adapt to Change. Featured keynote speakers included climate specialist, Dr. Gordon McBean, Dr. Neil Hutchinson of Hutchinson Environmental Science Ltd, futurist and founder of Trendhunter.com Jeremy Gutsche, personal resilience coach Sue McKee, comedian Graham Chittenden and special guest and celebrity, Chris Hadfield, former commander of the International Space Station (sponsored by RBC).



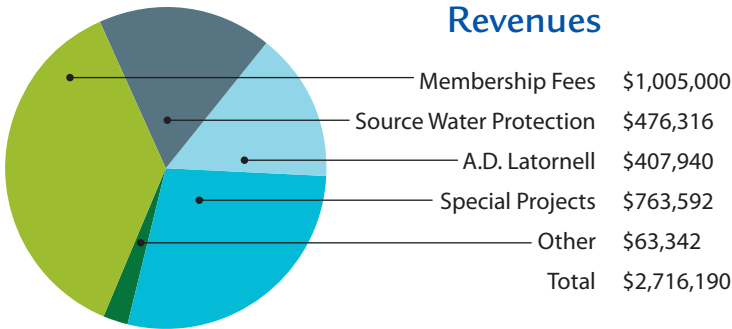
Chris Hadfield, Former Commander of the International Space Station

Protecting People and Property from Natural Hazards

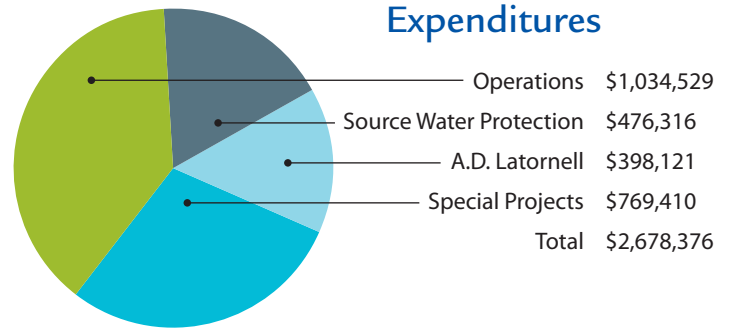
The Water Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) Funding Program is designed to ensure that major maintenance projects are undertaken on aging infrastructure built to protect lives and property from natural hazards. As part of the Ministry of Natural Resources' efforts to contribute to the provincial deficit, provincial funding for this program was temporarily reduced by 50% for a two year period ending in 2013/2014. Total investment of \$5 million dollars into protection of life and property was made; \$2.5 million in provincial funding was available with matching local investment. The 2013/2014 \$5 million dollar investment supported 63 of the more than 120 projects submitted from 28 Conservation Authorities which were valued at a total cost of \$11.9 million.

2013 Financial Information

Revenues



Expenditures



Conservation Ontario
P.O. Box 11, 120 Bayview Parkway
Newmarket ON, L3Y 4W3

tel: 905 895 0716
fax: 905 895 0751

info@conservationontario.ca
www.conservationontario.ca

Let's Chat!

