

# Fact Sheet

## CONSERVATION ONTARIO

Conservation Ontario represents a network of 36 Conservation Authorities which are resource management agencies that operate on the basis of local watersheds.

### Conservation Authorities:

- Protect Ontarians and their property from flooding and erosion hazards. They protect natural areas and open space; restore and protect aquatic and natural habitats; and provide recreational and educational opportunities to local residents. More than 12 million people, approximately 90 per cent of Ontario's population, live in the watersheds managed by Conservation Authorities.
- Are governed by a board of municipally appointed members, 78% of whom are also elected municipal councilors.
- Provide science-based advice and services within their watersheds. This includes review of municipal Official Plans and input into the planning processes of the majority of Ontario's municipalities.
- Are funded primarily through municipal levies & special projects (43%) and self generated revenues (37%). Additional sources of funding for Conservation Authorities include provincial grants & special projects including source protection (17%) and federal grants or contracts (3%).

### Programs and Services

- Conservation Authorities deliver programs and services totaling \$300 million annually through more than 3,000 full time and seasonal, part time staff.
- Conservation Authorities partner with municipal, provincial and federal governments, as well as landowners and other groups, to deliver community-based, practical solutions to a range of natural resource challenges.

#### *Protecting People and Property Against Flooding*

- Conservation Authorities manage \$2.7 billion dollars worth of flood control and prevention infrastructure including 900 dams, dykes, channels and erosion control structures.
- Flood management programs delivered by Conservation Authorities *prevent* an average of well over \$100 million a year in flood damages and loss of life.
- Programs and services to prevent and control flooding offered by Conservation Authorities include: monitoring conditions; modeling and forecasting flooding; issuing of flood warnings; regulation of development in flood prone areas, providing planning support and advice to municipalities to minimize the impacts of flooding; land acquisition; protecting significant ecosystems such as wetlands and forests that help to control flooding; and educating the public about flooding hazards.

### *Landholdings*

- Collectively Conservation Authorities own and protect approximately 144,000 hectares, including forests, wetlands, areas of natural & scientific interest, recreational lands, natural heritage and cultural sites as well as land for flood and erosion control.

### *Resource Management & Watershed Stewardship*

- The goal of Conservation Authority Watershed Stewardship programs is to protect and improve the health of our watersheds through projects developed cooperatively with local landowners. In 2010:
  - Conservation Authorities planted 2.9 million trees with 2,000 landowners.
  - Provided landowners with \$6.6 million in grants to carry out 2129 water quality improvements including projects such as erosion control, clean water diversion, agricultural best management practices, well decommissioning and septic system improvements.
  - Provided 346 landowners with \$1.4 million in grants to carry out 478 habitat rehabilitation/restoration projects.
- Conservation Authorities also work with municipalities and the Province to manage low water conditions. As of 2010, a total of 22 Low Water Strategies are in place by Conservation Authorities to manage low water conditions.

### *Monitoring the Health of our Watersheds*

- Conservation Authorities operate 437 monitoring sites within the provincial groundwater quality monitoring network and 387 sites in the provincial surface water quality monitoring network.
- Conservation Authorities undertake biological and fish monitoring. Benthic invertebrates, tiny organisms that live in or on the bottom sediments of rivers, streams and lakes and serve as an indicator of the overall aquatic environment, are monitored at 1,130 locations across the Province.

### *Source Water Protection*

- In partnership with the Province, Conservation Authorities support Source Protection Committees (SPC) in 19 regions and provide technical support to this initiative through 130 Conservation Authority staff specialists.
- Conservation Authorities have completed Watershed Assessment Reports and are beginning work on Source Protection Plans, which are scheduled for completion in 2012.

### *Recreation*

- Over 400 Conservation Areas are managed and owned by Conservation Authorities.
- 9,255 campsites and almost 2000 km of trails are located within Conservation Areas.
- Over 6 million people visited Conservation Areas in 2010 either as day visitors or campers.

### *Education*

- Conservation Authority outdoor education programs are aligned with Ontario's curriculum Programs are delivered to 475,000 Ontario students at more than 4400 schools for \$7 per student. In 2010, most Conservation Authorities participated in water festivals as part of their outdoor education programs.

### **Spokespersons**

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