

Fact Sheet

CONSERVATION ONTARIO

Conservation Ontario is a network of 36 Conservation Authorities, local resource management agencies working on a watershed basis. Conservation Authorities protect people and their property from natural hazards of flooding and erosion; protect natural areas and open space; restore and protect aquatic and natural habitats; and provide recreational and educational opportunities to local residents.

More than 11 million people, approximately 90 per cent of Ontario's population live in the watersheds managed by Conservation Authorities.

Conservation Authorities

- are governed by a board of municipally appointed members, two-thirds of whom are also elected municipal councilors.
- provide science-based advice and services within their watersheds, including input and review to municipal Official Plans and planning processes to the majority of Ontario's municipalities.
- are funded primarily through self generated revenues (37%) and municipal levies (36%). Additional sources of funding for Conservation Authorities include municipal special projects (7%), provincial grants & special projects including source protection (18%) and federal grants or contracts (2%).

Programs and Services

- Conservation Authorities deliver programs and services totaling more than \$275 million annually through over 3,000 full time and seasonal, part time staff.
- Conservation Authorities have a strong track record of partnering 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 own and operate \$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

- Conservation Authorities are significant landowners in the province. Collectively, they own approximately 143,000 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 in Ontario through cooperative projects with local landowners. In 2008:
 - Conservation Authorities planted 2.6 million trees with 1,496 landowners.
 - Provided landowners with \$1.7 million grants to carry out 617 water quality improvement projects including projects such as erosion control, clean water diversion, agricultural best management practices, well decommissioning and land acquisition.
 - Provided 241 landowners with \$1.2 million in grants to carry out 387 habitat rehabilitation/restoration projects.
- Conservation Authorities also work with municipalities and the province to manage low water conditions. As of 2008, a total of 24 Low Water Strategies are in place by Conservation Authorities to manage low water conditions.

Monitoring the Health of our Watersheds

- Conservation Authorities operate **421 monitoring sites** within the provincial groundwater quality monitoring network and 400 sites in the provincial surface water quality monitoring network.
- In addition, 31 Conservation Authorities undertake biological monitoring and 20 Conservation Authorities undertake fish monitoring. Monitoring of benthic invertebrates is carried out at 1,099 locations.

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 120 Conservation Authority staff specialists.
- Conservation Authorities have undertaken early work to characterize watersheds and complete water budgets which will provide the Source Protection Committees with an initial understanding of our watershed issues. They are now working on producing Risk Assessment Reports.

Recreation

- Over 400 Conservation Areas are managed and owned by Conservation Authorities.
- 7,809 campsites and just over 1,800 km of trails are located within Conservation Areas.
- Over 5 million people visited Conservation Areas in 2008 either as day visitors or campers.

Education

- Conservation Authority outdoor education programs are aligned with Ontario's curriculum. Programs are delivered to 450,000 Ontario students at over 2,000 schools for \$7 per student. In 2008, all Conservation Authorities participated in water festivals as part of their outdoor education programs.

Spokespersons

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