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September 2009

This newsletter provides information and updates on issues about Ontario's Conservation Authorities.

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Healthy Watersheds Contribute to Healthy Great Lakes

The Great Lakes/St. Lawrence basin is one of the most important regions on earth.



The five lakes contain 20% of the entire freshwater on the planet. This area supports globally significant species and habitats and the Great Lakes contain the world's largest freshwater fishery.

Gross production in this bi-national region is fourth only to the economies of the United States, Japan and China.

The Great Lakes region is also home to more than 40 million people including 11 million Ontarians. That's a lot of people who have to live in harmony with such a globally important ecological and economic region.

Paying attention to what we do on the land helps to keep both water and land resources onshore and in the Great Lakes healthy and sustainable.

Through many partnerships with all levels of government, agencies and landowners, **Ontario's Conservation Authorities** deliver programs and services in watersheds that help to keep our Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River healthy.

Climate Change Impacts the Great Lakes

IN SHORT

Conservation Authorities Promote Great Lakes Sustainability

Conservation Ontario's **Great Lakes Mission** is to work with all levels of government and residents to protect and improve the Great Lakes.

Our Great Lakes Vision is to apply an integrated watershed management approach to planning and implementation in order to protect and improve the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Ecosystem.

READ MORE

Protecting Ontario's Biggest Drinking Water Source

Under the **Clean Water Act**, communities in Ontario are required to develop source protection plans in order to protect their municipal sources of drinking water. Municipalities work with Conservation Authorities to map the vulnerable areas around Great Lakes drinking water intakes. **Source Protection plans** identify risks to local drinking water sources and develop strategies to reduce or eliminate these risks.

Source Protection & the Great Lakes (Ministry of the Environment)

Watershed Planning Sets the Stage to Protect and Restore the Great Lakes

The development of

Climate change will affect the Great Lakes Region by warming temperatures, decreasing lake levels, increasing weather variability and frequency of extreme weather events, changes in diversity, behaviour and ranges of plants and animals, impacts on the economy and elevating the value of the Great Lakes as a source of fresh water. A concerted effort by all levels of government, watershed managers, Great Lakes basin residents and stakeholders will be necessary to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Everything is Connected in a Watershed

The Great Lakes – St. Lawrence basin is a large-scale watershed where all water drains through the land to end up in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. In its newsletter, *Grand Connections*, the Grand River Conservation Authority illustrates how our actions on the land can impact the Great Lakes.



More than 70 per cent of Ontario's population uses the Great Lakes directly as a drinking water source, while 98 per cent of Ontario's population depends on the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin for their drinking water. What we do upstream impacts the downstream quality and supply of this important resource. Our actions also impact important wetlands, forests, and plants that help to keep our water clean.

Developing local watershed plans based on solid science help landowners and industry to target important conservation and stewardship initiatives to ensure enough clean water for all our uses today and in the future.

Conservation Authorities deliver numerous stewardship initiatives in partnership with landowners, industry, environmental groups and all levels of government to restore and protect important habitats. The **St. Clair Conservation Authority Habitat Restoration Projects** offer a

Lakewide Management Plans (LAMPs) for Lakes Superior, Erie/St. Clair, and Ontario are at various stages of completion and Lake Huron is proceeding with a related watershed initiative.

In the Lake Erie watershed, nine Conservation Authorities are working closely with Environment Canada and other partners to transition from plan formulation to implementation. Local efforts to make the connection are reflected in:

Lake Erie North Shore Management Plan
(Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority) and the Grand River Conservation Authority's **Grand Connection Fall 2009** newsletter.

Coordinated & Targeted Water Resource Monitoring is Needed to Ensure Healthy Great Lakes

As part of a commitment on behalf of the Ontario government to the 2007 Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) to restore, protect and conserve the Great Lakes basin, a research project was undertaken in 2008/09 in partnership with Conservation Ontario and conservation Authorities. This study evaluated water resource monitoring supporting agricultural stewardship and was funded by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs. The research showed clear support for improved communication and sharing

good example.

Nearshore Areas Need Our Attention

The nearshore of the Great Lakes is a vital resource that contributes to the social, economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes basin. It is the zone of greatest primary productivity, a location of diverse habitats for fish and wildlife, and the place where humans interact most closely with the lake, through fishing, swimming, boating and other activities.



Threats to the nearshore areas such as population growth, changing land use practices, invasive species, and climate change affect fisheries, beaches and recreational resources, waterfronts and drinking water. Through watershed planning, Conservation Authorities identify threats and work with other watershed partners to minimize their impact on our environment. Similarly, integrated shoreline management plans can bridge the gap between watershed plans and identify specific actions to benefit the nearshore. Credit Valley Conservation's **Lake Ontario Integrated Shoreline Study** offers an example.

A recent technical workshop on the Great Lakes Nearshore held by Conservation Ontario with Environment Canada funding involved key experts from all levels of government, conservation authorities and other agencies. The final workshop report, **Managing Watersheds for Great Lakes Benefits: Technical Workshop on Nutrients in the Nearshore (March 2009)** identifies key collaborative actions for addressing nearshore nutrient issues.

Conservation Authority Programs Protect the Great

of information on a level that meets the needs of practitioners and others involved in watershed monitoring and stewardship program development and delivery.

An Evaluation of Water Resource Monitoring Efforts in Support of Agricultural Stewardship in Watersheds of the Great Lakes Basin.

Stewardship Support and Advice is Available to Great Lakes Property Owners

The **Stewardship Guide for the Lake Superior Shoreline** from the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority helps property owners to evaluate the actions that they can do on their own properties to help keep Lake Superior healthy.

The Maitland Valley and Saugeen Valley Conservation Authorities teamed up with the Ministry of Natural Resources to produce **My Land – Our Water, a mapping application** that enables landowners in these two watersheds to view information about their property including soil, slope, wells and geology. In addition, you can learn about how water sources (including groundwater) can become contaminated. There is also lots of information about different kinds of stewardship actions that you can carry out to improve the health of your property.

Lakes

Areas of Concern Conservation Authorities work in partnership with many other organizations to implement programs geared to improve conditions within some of Canada's Areas of Concern that have been targeted for clean-up. Projects include urban and rural pollution control, habitat restoration, stormwater and wastewater management, and community engagement.

Niagara Remedial Action Plan (Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority)

St. Lawrence River (Cornwall) Area of Concern (Raisin Region Conservation Authority)

The Big Clean Up: Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan (Lower Trent Conservation & Quinte Conservation)

Regulating Shorelines Water levels in the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River system and large inland lakes fluctuate because of rainfall, evaporation, wind, storms and because of our activities such as water diversions or control structures. These water level fluctuations can pose a significant risk to life and property.

Conservation Authorities regulate shorelines and lands adjacent to the shoreline to ensure that development does not aggravate existing erosion, flooding or dynamic beach hazards. They also make sure that new hazards are not created and that new development is not at risk.

Conservation Authority shoreline protection policies (**Lake Erie Shoreline Protection Policy** – Grand River Conservation Authority), shoreline management plans (Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority **Shoreline Management Plan**) and collaborative arrangements (**Conservation Halton**) are all important program components to regulate and protect our Great Lakes shorelines.

Monitoring the State of Our Great Lakes Watersheds

Healthy land and water resources ensure safe drinking water and resilient forests, wetlands and wildlife, enabling us to adapt more easily to climate

Visit a Great Lake

Conservation Authorities offer a wide variety of trails and birding opportunities that connect you to the Great Lakes including:

Shore Ridges Conservation Area (Sault Ste Marie Conservation Authority) Lake Superior

Morrison Dam Conservation Area (Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority) Lake Huron

Stone Road Alvar Conservation Area (Essex Region Conservation Authority) Lake Erie

Rattray Marsh (Credit Valley Conservation) Lake Ontario

Petticoat Creek Conservation Area (Toronto & Region Conservation Authority) Lake Ontario

For a listing of some of Ontario's best Conservation areas please visit [here](#).

change. Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities monitor the health of natural resources in Ontario's watersheds because it helps us to better understand the local environmental issues, to focus actions where they are needed the most and track progress over time. The **Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority** monitors Great Lakes coastal wetlands in partnership with Environment Canada.

The **Upper Thames River Conservation Authority's watershed report cards** illustrate the watershed connections. Reducing pollution in the Thames River watersheds helps protect the Great Lakes.

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Conservation Ontario represents Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities, local watershed management agencies located throughout the province and works in partnership with government, agencies and landowners.

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