

# Conservation Ontario E-News

July, 2010



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Watershed Stewardship and Conservation Authorities

Adapt to Climate Change Impacts

Stewardship Pays

Collaborations Are The Key To Successful Stewardship



## Keeping you informed...



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

## Stewardship Quick Links

### Conservation Authorities' Rural Water Quality Programs

These programs are initiatives that provide technical assistance and financial incentives to improve and protect water quality on your property and/or farm often in partnership with municipalities, other agencies, or government programs.

[Healthy Waters Program](#), Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority

[Huron Clean Water Project](#), Maitland Valley Conservation Authority

[Rideau Valley Rural Clean Water Act](#), Rideau Valley Conservation

[Clean Water Program](#), Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

[Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Stewardship](#)  
Under the Clean Water Act, the Ministry of

## Conservation Authorities' Stewardship Programs Protect Our Environment

Conservation Authorities have a long history in planning and delivering watershed stewardship programs and services to protect Ontario's land and water resources.

In 2008, Conservation Authorities:

- Planted 2.6 million trees with 1,500 landowners
- Provided \$1.7 million in grants to carry out over 600 water quality improvement projects
- Provided almost 250 landowners with \$1.2 million in grants to carry out 387 habitat rehabilitation and/or restoration projects.

Although the types of programs may vary between Conservation Authorities, water quality improvement projects, habitat restoration and tree planting are the most predominant across the province. A list of [Conservation Authority Stewardship Programs](#) is found on Conservation Ontario's website.

the Environment has launched the [Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program](#), a financial assistance program to help landowners and businesses take action to reduce threats to local municipal drinking water sources. Conservation Authorities are assisting to deliver a total of \$21 million in assistance over three years from spring 2008 to spring 2011.

Conservation Ontario has developed the [Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Toolkit](#) which has fact sheets and information about: septic systems, private wells, runoff and erosion control, pollution prevention, and what landowners can do to protect water quality and quantity.

[Source Protection Stewardship](#)  
Ausable Bayfield-Maitland Valley Source Protection

[Drinking Water Stewardship Program](#)  
Lakehead Region Source Protection

[Drinking Water Source Protection in the GTA](#)  
CTC Source Protection Region

**Interactive Map Helps to Identify Aquatic Species at Risk**  
Conservation Ontario's [interactive map](#) provides access to information about Aquatic Species at Risk (SAR) within Conservation Authority watersheds as provided by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO).

These maps assist agencies in determining whether development proposals should be referred to DFO as a result of presence or absence of Species at Risk and impacts of development proposal activities on the species and their habitats.

A Species at Risk package has been developed for each Conservation Authority watershed and includes a [Distribution Map Reference Guide](#) (0.1MB) document, map legend, and key map for the area of interest and a table which lists Species at Risk found within the Conservation Authority boundaries.

**Aquatic Species are a Barometer for the Health of a River** - The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority has initiated an Ecosystem Recovery Plan to protect aquatic species at risk in the Thames River. If aquatic species populations are declining, it is a warning sign for the state of the river's health. The recovery planning process is mandated by provincial and federal governments, with the two Conservation Authorities on the Thames also playing lead roles in its development.  
[LEARN MORE](#)

Key to the success of Conservation Authority programs are important local partnerships with landowners, government, stewardship councils, other agencies and community groups.

Conservation Authorities offer technical advice, design services and financial incentives to landowners.

[Conservation Authority Watershed Stewardship Fact Sheet](#)

## Stewardship Actions Can Help Us to Adapt to Climate Change

Climate change is affecting Ontario with warming temperatures, increasing weather variability and frequency of extreme weather events. We are noticing more drought, an increase in extreme rainfall events, and changes in diversity, behavior and ranges of plants and animals. Violent storms create floods and contaminated runoff.

There are many stewardship practices that can help us to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

**Protecting Wetlands** can help to prevent or reduce the impact of this by improving water quality, storing excess water and slowing down the flow of flood waters with trees, shrubs and streamside vegetation. In partnership with other organizations and government, the *Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority* participates in the [Healthy Headwaters Wetlands Initiative](#) which works with landowners in Huron County to restore and enhance local wetlands to improve our ability to adapt to climate change.

**Planting Trees** helps to absorb carbon, reduce flooding and improve water quality. The *Grey Sauble* and the *Saugeen Valley Conservation Authorities* have partnered and operate the [Grey Bruce Forestry Service](#). Their goal is to promote the effective and sustainable management of forests for the benefit of all stakeholders, from private land owners to municipalities to the environment and climate itself. Another example for a Conservation Authority program is Otonabee Conservation's [Tree Program](#).

**Shrubs, Plants and Trees along lakes, rivers and streams** can store carbon dioxide, reduce erosion during high flows and protect aquatic habitat during low flows. They help to buffer the effects of extreme weather events; as well as store and provide water during times of drought. *Kawartha Conservation* has established a number of [Shoreline Project demonstration sites](#) that illustrate different naturalization techniques on public property.

### [Sydenham River Recovery Strategy](#)

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority

### **Stewardship Guidance for Landowners**

Modeled after the successful Environmental Farm Plan, Stewardship Guides for rural landowners have been developed and are being used across the province. Some examples are provided below. For more information about these guides, associated workshops and assistance please contact your local CA.

### [Rural Landowner Stewardship Guide](#)

(2007) Provides a manual, worksheets generic forms, presentation and discussion forum.

### [Healthy Home Guidebook](#)

South Nation Conservation

### [A Stewardship Guide for the Lake Superior Shoreline](#)

Lakehead Region Conservation Authority, 2009

### [A Guide to Stewardship Planning for Natural Areas](#)

MNR, 2006

Conservation Ontario is a member of the Stewardship Network of Ontario

[www.stewardshipcentre.on.ca](http://www.stewardshipcentre.on.ca)

## Stewardship Pays Off

### NATURE PROVIDES BENEFITS YOU MAY NOT EVEN REALIZE

Nature provides important things that we need every day: clean and sustainable water, good air quality; and many food crops. Stewardship practices such as tree and shrub planting, water conservation, stream restoration, wetland protection and habitat enhancement all help to preserve these important natural resources.

The natural environment of the Credit River Watershed near Toronto, Ontario provides millions of dollars in ecological goods and services to residents of the watershed each and every year. A new report, [Natural Credit: Assessing the Value of Natural Capital in the Credit River Watershed](#) documents the economic values of ecosystems. This study, conducted by the Pembina Institute and *Credit Valley Conservation* reveals the close connections between our economy and the environment.

- Wetland services were found to be the most valuable in the watershed returning an annual flow of \$187 million/yr
- Upland forests, riparian forests and urban forests return a minimum of \$71 million/yr
- Water benefits are at least \$15 million/yr

### [LEARN MORE](#)

### SOURCE PROTECTION STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES ARE COST EFFECTIVE

The George Morris Centre, a Canada-wide, non-profit think tank based in Guelph, Ontario, teamed up with *Conservation Ontario*, the *St. Clair Conservation Authority* and a number of economic and science experts to conduct a Cost Benefit Analysis of Source Water Best Management Practices (BMPs) that can be used as alternatives to costly construction projects. The case study looks at the building of a pipeline from Lake Huron to the Town of Strathroy-Cardoc and whether or not BMPs could have achieved the same results with lower costs. Results from this study can be found on [Conservation Ontario's website](#).

## Stewardship Collaboration Is The Key To Success

### HEALTHY FISH

Water quality and fish habitat have been seriously degraded in the tributaries which flow into Lake St. Francis near Cornwall, Ontario. Historical and

ongoing land use practices have contributed to high sedimentation, habitat loss due to channelization and excessive nutrient and bacteria levels. These tributaries are home to a wide range of fish species and serve as important nursery and spawning areas for walleye, northern pike, yellow perch, muskellunge, small mouth bass, large mouth bass and forage fish.

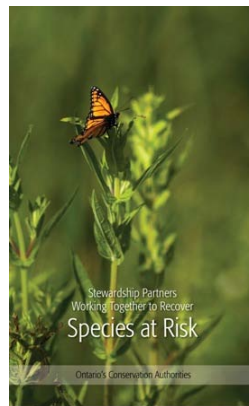
The *Raisin Region Conservation Authority* is part of a collaborative of organizations trying to address these problems with the [Lake St Francis/St. Lawrence River Tributary Restoration Program](#). Other partners include the local agricultural community, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), St. Lawrence River Restoration Council (SLRRC), Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) and the Resource Stewardship Council (RSC) of S .D.& G.

### **SPECIES AT RISK**

The greatest threat to plant and animal species today is habitat loss due to population growth and development, invasive species, pollution, climate change and using natural resources faster than they can be replenished.

Conservation Authorities and their partners deliver stewardship programs to conserve, enhance and recover endangered and threatened species. The battle for biodiversity will be won or lost in backyards, on farms and in Ontario's green spaces by people, agencies and government teaming up to give habitat a hand.

Eight projects funded under the provincial Species at Risk Stewardship Fund are featured in a fact sheet entitled [Stewardship Partners Working Together to Recover Species at Risk.](#)



## **Healthy Watersheds Ensure Healthy Great Lakes**

Because what we do on the land upstream impacts

conditions downstream, stewardship actions taking place in Great Lakes watersheds can greatly help the quality of the Great Lakes downstream.

As part of a commitment to restore, protect and conserve watersheds in the Great Lakes basin, Conservation Ontario partnered with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority to conduct a workshop on water resource monitoring and stewardship. Participants supported improved communication and data sharing that meets a variety of needs, including the provision of useful information to guide and encourage agricultural stewardship to protect Great Lake Watersheds. The results of this workshop are available in a report entitled:

[An evaluation of Water Resource Monitoring Efforts in Support of Agricultural Stewardship in Watersheds of the Great Lakes \(February 2009\).](#)

### Stewardship 'Stats'

Conservation Authorities deliver local stewardship programs to landowners on private and public lands.

#### Habitat Restoration Projects in 2008

- 387 projects
- 241 land owners
- 346 hectares and 222km of streams
- \$1.2 million in grant dollars given out

#### Water Supply & Septic Management Projects in 2008

- 682 projects
- \$1 million in grant dollars given out. 67% of these grant dollars came from Municipalities.

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

[www.conservationontario.ca](http://www.conservationontario.ca)

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