

Fact Sheet

Conservation Areas Ontario's Conservation Authorities

Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities collectively own and manage approximately 400 Conservation Areas – natural areas that protect a wide variety of the province's wetlands, forests, lakes, rivers and streams, wildlife, birds and plants.

More than 250 of these areas are publicly accessible and offer a variety of outdoor activities.

These Conservation Areas play an important *environmental*, *recreational* and *educational* role in Ontario and contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing of more than 5 million Ontarians who visit them each year.

Conservation Areas protect Ontario's Environment

- Conservation Areas play an important role in Ontario by protecting our environment, our lands and our ecosystems. They do this through soil conservation, as well as flood plain management, forest and wildlife management.
- Conservation Areas protect forests, wetlands, plant life and wildlife and improve the overall health of our watersheds, including the quality and supply of our water resources such as recharge areas.

Step Into Nature – Getting People Active and Healthy

- Conservation Areas encourage people to get outdoors and be active, as well as enjoy and appreciate nature. They provide year round facilities and outdoor recreational opportunities for people of all ages and a range of abilities, including picnicking, boating, camping, swimming, hiking, fishing, cycling, snow-shoeing, downhill skiing, cross-country skiing and even more
- extreme recreational opportunities such as snowboarding, rock climbing and ice climbing.
- Although some Conservation Areas have limited access in order to protect sensitive lands and/or wildlife, many provide important public recreational opportunities at low or no cost.
- Ontario's Conservation Authorities offer just over 1,800 km of trails. These trails meander through a wide variety of natural features including escarpment areas, moraines, shorelines, forests and wetlands.

Living Classrooms That Bring People and Nature Together

- Conservation Areas are used to help teach the public about the importance of our environment and how it is impacted by our activities and lifestyles.
- Conservation Authorities operate a total of 32 permanent Interpretive Centres, 14 Seasonal Centres, and include many interpretive trails and heritage features.
- In 2008, over 2,000 schools and close to 450,000 students participated in environmental education programs run by Conservation Authorities at their Conservation Areas, which included programming for 59 distinct school boards, which is more than half of the province's 105 school boards.

How and when did Conservation Areas first get established?

- Outdoor recreation and environmental education has been an important component of Conservation Authority operation since the 1950s.
- The first Conservation Authorities were formed when the Conservation Authorities Act was established in 1946. Conservation Area land use hasn't changed much since the beginning – they are used for specific resource management purposes such as flood control, floodplain management, forestry, natural area preservation and to provide recreational and educational opportunities.

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 habits; 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.

For More information;
Conservation Ontario
P.O. Box 11, 120 Bayview Parkway, Newmarket ON L3Y 4W3
(tel) 906-895-07167 (fax) 905-895-0751
info@conservationontario.ca
www.conservationontario.ca

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www.ontarioconservationareas.ca