

Conservation Update



October, 2011

Authority Hires New General Manager

Brian McDougall has been hired as the new General Manager of the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority. Brian has worked with the Conservation Authority for 22 years and has held the senior position of Director of Watershed Services since 2001. He holds an honours degree from McMaster University.

Brian brings a host of experience to his new role. As a senior manager, he directed a number of departments including Conservation Services, Flood and Erosion Control and Biological Research.

"I am very honoured to be trusted with the leadership of our Authority. We have an excellent staff and a reputation across the province for providing a strong, financially responsible program for our member municipalities," McDougall said.

Brian is replacing Ralph Coe who worked at the Conservation Authority for 32 years and sat at the helm since 1996. Ralph has been appointed Strathroy-Caradoc's new Chief Administrative Officer.

"The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority's success was led by Ralph's positive outlook, and co-operative approach along with strong, responsible and positive leadership," said Andy Bruziewicz, Chair of the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority and councillor from the City of Sarnia. "He was more than a good General Manager for the Authority, he is the best public sector manager I have ever met."

"We look forward to working with Brian. He is very capable and we have full confidence that he will continue the fine legacy established by the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority," Bruziewicz said.

Brian takes on his new responsibilities on October 31.



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Union Gas Donates to Conservation Education

A conservation and safety program that will teach elementary school students in the St. Clair Region to be more aware of the power of water, especially during the spring thaw, is getting some help from Union Gas through a \$10,000 grant awarded as part of the company's Centennial celebrations.

The grant was awarded to the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority for our Spring Water Awareness Program, which will see Conservation Education staff visiting schools in Lambton and Kent counties to teach students from kindergarten to Grade 6 about the dangers of being close to the edge of swelling streams, creeks and rivers during the spring thaw.



Dave Simpson, Director of Storage and Transmission Operations, Union Gas; Julie Dill, President of Union Gas; Bill Bilton, Mayor of the Township of Dawn-Euphemia and a member of the Conservation Authority and Foundation; and Andy Bruziewicz, Chair of the Conservation Authority were on hand along with the grade 3-4 class at Dawn-Euphemia Elementary School to receive a cheque for \$10,000 from Union Gas.



SCRCA Helps Municipalities With Drains

Municipalities have a legal responsibility to work in accordance with Fisheries and Oceans Canada requirements when municipal projects could impact fish habitat. Potential impacts often arise when municipal drain maintenance is proposed.

"Municipalities, through the Conservation Authority's Board of Directors, requested the SCRCA assist them by providing advice and administering drain reviews to allow for a more speedy approval process," Bill Bilton, Mayor of the Township of Dawn-Euphemia said. "This has been a big help to the municipalities ensuring the work gets done while respecting the important fish habitat in our waterways." Mr. Bilton also sits on the Authority's Board of Directors and is a member of the federal/provincial Drain Action Working Group.

A long-term agreement between Fisheries and Oceans Canada and St. Clair Region Conservation Authority allows Authority staff to work directly with municipalities providing fish habitat advice for municipal drainage projects.

"With the Conservation Authority helping us with the federal review of drains for fisheries, we can obtain approvals or fisheries advice in a timely manner," David Neely, Drainage Superintendent for the Township of St. Clair said. "We understand we have to abide by federal laws and the Authority helps us do that while understanding our needs to keep drainage system operating," Neely explained.

Many of the 6,000 kilometres of watercourses in the St. Clair region provide habitat for fish. Our region has over 80 species of fish, including 7 Species at Risk and many game fish including walleye, pike, bass, sunfish and rainbow trout. Even the small watercourses provide important feeding and nursery habitat for minnows, shiners and darters.

Projects which may affect these watercourses include bridge repairs, culvert replacements and municipal drain maintenance. In some cases, special conditions can be applied to a project which allow it to proceed but protect important nursery habitat, such as timing the work so it does not interfere with spawning or leaving mature vegetation on one side of the watercourse to provide shade and cover.

So far in 2011, St. Clair Conservation staff screened over 157 proposals which could affect fish habitat in our region. Where there was potentially serious impact on fish habitat, proposals were referred to Fisheries and Oceans Canada for review. The majority of the projects required only letters of advice to the proponent, recommending measures to avoid negative impacts on fish habitat.

Authority Working With Trees Ontario for Seeds

Plant a tree and hope it grows - no it is not that easy. Foresters understand that it is important to select the proper species for the site conditions where the tree is to be planted. Not only that, but a tree should be planted from a seed that evolved in the same geographical location.

The SCRCA is working with Trees Ontario to collect local seed. The seed is supplied to Summerville Nursery who will grow local tree stock for planting. Seed collected in 2011 will be used in our tree planting program in 2013 - 2015. Seeds normally collected include red oak, bur oak, shumard oak, black walnut, shagbark hickory, hackberry, silver maple and sycamore.

Trees Ontario is trying to restock their seed bank and approached the SCRCA to collect red cedar and Norway spruce seeds. Seeds are also supplied to Lambton College as part of our partnership with them for use in their greenhouse.



New Wetland at Bowen's Creek

Bowen's Creek Lands are a Lambton County treasure. Located on the St. Clair Clay Plains, its wet prairie and mature deciduous forest provides refuge for more than 15 locally rare Carolinian flora and fauna. Riddell's Goldenrod, Shumard Oak, Hooded Warbler and Climbing Prairie Rose, each with distinct habitat requirements, thrive within the property bounds. Local naturalists and wildlife experts envision future wetlands providing waterfowl brood, nesting and staging habitat.



For these reasons, everyone involved was thrilled to seize an opportunity to construct wetlands on a farmed portion of this 50 acre property owned by the County of Lambton. The property is located in part of an area known formerly as the "1800 block" which includes the Bickford Oak Wood Conservation Reserve and the Ducks Unlimited Canada project on Terra Nitrogen owned lands.

In total, more than 5 hectares of wetland were created on low lying lands areas that "want to be wet." Construction of 3 impounded wetlands and approximately 10 shallow sloughs involved decommissioning existing drainage and some minimal land contouring.

The project was funded by Ducks Unlimited Canada, Friends of St. Clair River and the RBC Blue Water Project. Since 2008, SCRCA has managed this land on behalf of Lambton County. Constructing these wetlands will make a significant contribution to meeting the goals of the Bowen's Creek Management Plan submitted to Lambton County in April 2011. This project is one of several enhancement projects planned over the next five years including more planting and naturalization of the site. The property is also within the St. Clair River Area of Concern. The addition of wetlands will contribute to meeting goals of the Remedial Action Plan.

SCRCA to Provide Woodlands Conservation By-Law Services for the County of Lambton

Based on a request from the County of Lambton, the SCRCA will be administering the County's Woodlands Conservation By-Law. The County and the Authority wish to expand upon their existing relationship with the goal of conserving and improving existing forests in Lambton County, as well as increasing forest cover in Lambton County.

Lambton County retains the responsibility for the By-Law. Authority staff will report to the County for matters related to the Tree Cutting By-law. For more information contact Tim Payne, Woodlands Conservation Officer at 519 245-3710 ext. 24.

Chatham-Kent & Lambton Water Festival a Great Success

The 5th Annual Chatham-Kent & Lambton Water Festival was a great success with 1,301 grade 4 students participating in hands on activities. Students learned how they could make a difference in saving our precious water and natural resources while visiting the C. M. Wilson Conservation Area during 3 days of blue sky and sunshine.

Approximately 45 adults volunteered to lead Activity Centres and help with tasks during the Festival. In addition, 310 High School students provided leadership at the activity centres.

Thanks to Enbridge and Friends of the St. Clair River who sponsored the cost of bussing within the St. Clair Region watershed, 7 schools and 12 classes from our region were able to attend this worthwhile event. For more information on the Water Festival visit ckwaterfest.com.

Next Conservation Authority Board Meeting

Thursday, November 17, 2011, 10:00 a.m.
Administration Office

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