

Conservation Update

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority

March 2014

Flood Outlook for Spring

It has been a long, cold winter but more seasonable conditions are on the way. Environment Canada is forecasting high temperatures above zero for the next week but slightly below zero for overnight lows. "This maple syrup type weather is just what we need to slowly reduce the snow pack and start the melt of river ice," said Girish Sankar, Manager of Water Resources for the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority. "Across the watershed there is a lot of water lying on the ground in the form of snow. We range from about 55 mm to 90 mm (2 in. – 3.5 in.) of water ready to enter the soil and watercourses," Sankar explained. Thick ice is still an issue on lower portions of the Sydenham River with ice thickness exceeding 40 cm (15 in.). When this ice breaks up, ice jams are very possible and could result in flooding above the jams.

There are important benefits to our cold, snowy winter. The water in the form of snow can help to replenish soil moisture, ground water and wetlands. The speed of the melt will determine how much water soaks into the ground and how much water runs off into drains and rivers. The deep snow pack may also contribute to increasing lake levels as water stored on the land makes its way into the Great Lakes over the spring and summer.

The Conservation Authority continues to monitor watershed conditions and will issue advisories should flood risks increase. As we move into the spring melt season, residents are reminded to avoid watercourses and flooded areas due to slippery banks, cold and swift moving water, and deteriorating ice. Parents in particular are reminded to keep their children away from floodplain areas.



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Maple Syrup Festival

1,000 people visited the A.W. Campbell Conservation Area to experience demonstrations of syrup production from times past. Tours included a story of how maple syrup was discovered by our First Nations people who later taught pioneers the wonders of this important staple. The festival was held March 15 - 16. The Alvinston Firemen's Association provided the traditional pancake and sausage meals at the Alvinston Community Centre.



Canoe and Kayak Race - April 13

The Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race is fast approaching. Each year, about 70 canoes and kayaks compete in one of several classes. There are classes ranging from the 16-km competitive races to the 7-km recreation races. Funds raised from the canoe race go toward conservation education. Conservation Authority board members and municipal councillors are invited to join the VIP class for some friendly inter-municipal competition. To find out more, visit our website at www.scrca.on.ca and check the Events at the bottom of the page or call Sharon at 519 882-2399.



Sydenham River Habitat Stewardship Program

This has been a great year of implementing stewardship projects in the East Sydenham River watershed. Nearly 21 ha of land have been conserved, restored or enhanced to benefit water quality and wildlife habitat along the Sydenham River. Projects include wetlands, riparian buffers, erosion control and windbreaks. Funding from Environment Canada through the Habitat Stewardship Program has supported the implementation of these projects. As we enter the second year of the three year grant, SCRCA staff are gearing up for site visits with interested landowners all over the watershed. If you are interested in having a project on your property such as a wetland, block tree planting, or riparian buffer please contact the Conservation Authority.

Grants for Drain Habitat Improvements

SCRCA recently allocated \$24,000 in grant towards habitat enhancements on municipal drains. Enhancement projects are located within the City of Sarnia, Township of St. Clair, and Chatham-Kent (in former Dover Township). Funds go towards planting native vegetation, adding wider buffers, and adding special features to decrease sediment and improve fish habitat in municipal drains. This two-year program is supported by the federal Great Lakes Sustainability Fund (GLSF), a program that supports the restoration of the St. Clair River Area of Concern (AOC).

Grants to Help Reptiles at Risk

Snakes, turtles and even a lizard will get a helping hand with funding from the Ministry of Natural Resources in the amount of \$25,000 per year for three years. This money will help protect and enhance habitats of Reptiles at Risk in the St. Clair Region. Some of the projects include monitoring, nesting boxes, and outreach and education. Target species for this program include the Eastern Foxsnake, Eastern Hognose Snake, Butler's Gartersnake, Spiny Softshell Turtle, Blanding's Turtle, and the Five-lined Skink, Ontario's only lizard. Please contact Kelli Smith at 519 245-3710 ext. 256 (ksmith@scrca.on.ca) if you spot one of these creatures this year.

Next Conservation Authority Board Meeting

Thursday, April 17, 10:00 a.m.
Administration Office

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