

Conservation Update

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority

August 2017

Enbridge Provides Support for Tree Seed Collection Program

Enbridge has made a generous donation to the St. Clair Conservation Services department in order to support the development of a tree seed collection mentorship and training program.

Trees are genetically adapted to growing conditions in their “seed zone” which means trees need to be sourced from and planted within their zone to grow to their greatest potential. There are very few organizations or private individuals collecting seed in Southern Ontario and there is a desperate need for collectors in the SCRCA region. Private and governmental seed storage facilities are running low on stock and need to be replenished on an annual basis. As such, Conservation Services staff are working to develop a program with the funds from Enbridge to teach and mentor interested individuals on proper seed collection and processing techniques. With this knowledge and skill set, people can tap into a seasonal income stream year after year and support local tree planting efforts. The one-day education portion will be held during the first week of October 2017 (date to be announced).

Enbridge has an interest in giving back to their community and St. Clair Conservation staff are excited about this partnership as this type of mentorship program has the potential to give back in a big way – it will aid in the future sustainability of local forestry.



Conservation Services Technician collecting deciduous tree seed

Partnership with Lambton Water Centre to Improve Flood Forecasting

The Water Resources department at St. Clair Conservation recently partnered with the Lambton Water Centre at Lambton College for an exciting and innovative project that will modernize flood forecasting. The project, comprised of three components, will involve the installation of a camera near the confluence of the north and east branches of the Sydenham River to allow for real-time monitoring of flood and ice conditions in the town of Wallaceburg. The other components, consisting of a mobile water level logger and precipitation gauge, will allow staff to monitor the movement of precipitation through the watershed and determine changes in precipitation patterns attributed to climate change. The project is expected to be operational in early 2018.



L.O. Stonehouse Memorial Walk Bridge in Wallaceburg overlooking the confluence of the Sydenham River



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Turtle Birthday Party to Celebrate Released Hatchlings

There are eight species of turtle native to Ontario, seven of which are considered Species At Risk (SAR). In an effort to support and help recover these turtles—in particular, the endangered Spiny Softshell Turtle—the Biology staff at St. Clair Conservation have been collecting turtle eggs and working with Salthaven Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Centre as well as Upper Thames River Conservation Authority to incubate the eggs throughout the nesting season. Incubating eggs gets these turtles past their first hurdle and gives them a chance at survival. So far this year, St. Clair Biology staff have released over 300 turtle hatchlings – each cohort being returned to the same location their eggs were originally found.

To celebrate this accomplishment and to teach the public about Ontario's reptiles, staff held a "Turtle Birthday Party" at A.W. Campbell Conservation Area on August 25th, 2017. Our biologists had some newly hatched turtles for people to meet before they were released back into the wild. Visitors had a chance to hear a presentation on reptiles, talk with biologists and partake in educational games – there were over 50 people in attendance.



A Spiny Softshell Turtle hatchling released by SCRCA biologists

Kids playing a game at the "Turtle Birthday Party"



Soil Health Conference Set for February 2018

The SCRCA's Soil Health Conference is scheduled for February 15, 2018 in Chatham ON. There will be presentations from international researchers and Certified Crop Advisers (CCAs) as well as farmer panel discussions. Farmer panel discussions will focus on tillage options, cover crops, 4R nutrient stewardship, alternative grazing and stewardship on big acres. For more information contact Laura Biancolin, Agricultural Outreach Technician at lbiancolin@scrcan.on.ca.



Soil slaking demonstration by Dr. Bill Deen, University of Guelph

Dunes and Gardens Workshop

St. Clair Conservation co-hosted a Dunes and Gardens workshop with Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority in Port Franks on August 28th, 2017. Nearly 40 people attended the event that focused on protecting dunes and improving soil health in rural gardens. Don Lobb, P. Ag. (Hon), Director-At-Large of the Soil Conservation Council of Canada, spoke of the importance of applying lessons from nature in the farm field and the home garden to maintain healthy productive soil. Healthy garden plants require healthy soil. Hannah Cann, Coastal Stewardship Coordinator of Lake Huron Coastal Centre for Conservation, shared dune conservation practices that lakeshore residents could implement on their own to protect and preserve the Lake Huron shoreline.



Don Lobb presenting at the Dunes and Gardens Workshop

Twilight Pasture Tour

The SCRCA, the Lambton Soil and Crop Improvement Association, and the Lambton Cattlemen's Association organized a twilight pasture tour this August to discuss rotational and alternative cattle grazing systems with local farmers. The event had an excellent turnout, with about 100 farmers in attendance. The tour was hosted at Tim and Tina Lehrbass' farm in Alvinston. Tim and Tina have done a lot of work with the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association's Species at Risk Farm Incentive Program to split their pastureland to allow for rotational grazing. Tim also interseeds his corn field to accommodate for overwinter grazing while his pasture rests. The feature speaker, Doug Wray, an Alberta rancher grazes 365 days a year and has received many leadership awards from grassland and forage associations. Jack Kyle, former Provincial Grazing Specialist and Tim Prior, Brussels Agri Services led the pasture walk.



Rotational cattle grazing pasture tour

Aamjiwnaang First Nation Envirofest

SCRCA staff participated in Aamjiwnaang's Envirofest in August. Information was shared with community members on the St. Clair River Remedial Action Plan and a number of Conservation Authority programs including the unique and valuable wildlife found within our watershed and our programs to protect species at risk, critical habitat, and vulnerable ecosystems.

Area of Concern
Remedial Action
Plan Coordinator,
Kelly Johnson
speaking with
Envirofest
attendees



Phragmites Spading Day at Ipperwash Beach

St. Clair Conservation staff joined the Ipperwash Phragmites (IPP) and a team of 38 volunteers in August for their "Phrag Spading Day" to remove invasive *Phragmites australis* from Ipperwash Beach. The team spent 6 hours removing invasive *Phragmites* and white sweet clover from the dunes along a 2.7km stretch of beach. Volunteers used a spading technique to remove *Phragmites*. Individual plants were spaded on a 45° angle at their base, splitting the plant from its underground rhizome. The plant stalk was removed and the soil was left undisturbed. By leaving the soil undisturbed, *Phragmites* will re-establish at a slower rate, giving native species a better chance of re-colonizing.



Phragmites spading removal technique (Photo: Lynn Short)



Agricultural
Outreach
Technician,
Laura Biancolin
spading
Phragmites on
Ipperwash Beach

Next Conservation Authority Board Meeting

Thursday, September 21, 10:00 a.m.

member of

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority

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