

Conservation Update

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority

March 2018

A.W. Campbell Maple Syrup Festival

Over 1,300 visitors came out the A.W. Campbell Maple Syrup Festival held this March. It takes cold, frosty nights and bright, sunny days for sap to flow from the trees – the weather could not have been better for the annual two-day festival. Interpretive staff were on hand to demonstrate the different methods of maple syrup production used throughout history and discuss the significance this liquid gold had in the lives of First Nations people and for pioneers.



After the demonstrations, visitors were able to explore beautiful trails, enjoy scenic horse-drawn wagon rides, and try maple taffy samples. The Alvinston Firemen's Association held their traditional pancake meals at the nearby Alvinston Community Centre.



Steve Arnold, SCRCA Chair; Ian Forster, PMC Community Relations Advisor; Erin Carroll, SCRCA Director of Biology; and Kelli Smith, SCRCA Watershed Biologist; met at the laboratory facility in Strathroy where the Authority processes samples for the Water Quality Monitoring Program.

Plains Midstream Canada Donates to Water Quality Monitoring

This January, Plains Midstream Canada donated \$3,000 to the Authority's Water Quality Monitoring Program. Biology staff regularly measure water chemistry and study aquatic organisms at monitoring stations throughout the St. Clair region. The data collected and analysed through this program allows the Authority to track changes to water quality and helps identify priority areas in need of action.



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"working together for a healthy environment"

Spring Tree Planting About to Begin

Spring has officially arrived! Tree nurseries are anticipating a normal tree seedling lift date this spring, which means trees will be arriving in late-April. Approximately 58,000 trees have been ordered and will be planted on private lands throughout the watershed by Conservation Services staff. A number of landowners have chosen to plant their own trees and approximately 5,300 trees will be held in cold storage until these landowners are ready to pick up and plant them.



Large stock tree delivery to the Authority storage facility.

Grants from Forests Ontario, Habitat Stewardship, Ontario Power Generation, and the Lambton County Tree Replacement Fund are available to landowners to help provide significant subsidies for those undertaking larger scale stewardship and tree planting projects on their properties. Not all projects qualify for funding, however, this spring more than \$156,000 in grants will be provided to landowners planting trees on their properties as part of an overall conservation habitat and stewardship initiative.

To find out more about the Authority's tree planting program and grants available for landowners, please contact Steve Shaw or Jeff Sharp at 519-245-3710.



A tree seedling afforestation plantation after one year.

McKeough Dam Operated During February Flood Event

This February, significant snowmelt, unstable ice conditions and heavy rainfall caused widespread flooding of the Sydenham River. As a result of the conditions, the Authority's Water Resources team operated the McKeough Dam for the seventh time since its construction in 1984. The last time the dam was operated was during a flood event in 2009.



When the dam is closed, water is diverted from the North Branch of the Sydenham River to the McKeough Floodway. This helps to mitigate flooding in downstream settlements like Wallaceburg.

Early in the morning on February 21st, water levels rose quickly at which time the dam operation criteria were met and the Authority closed the gates of the McKeough Dam. When the dam is closed, excess water from the North Branch of the Sydenham River is diverted through the McKeough Floodway to the St. Clair River. In a matter of hours, the water levels downstream in Wallaceburg began to stabilize. The watershed received an additional 25 mm of rainfall on February 22nd. By February 23rd, the flood peaks from the East Sydenham River had passed through Wallaceburg with no reports of major residential flooding. The gates were slowly opened over a three-day period starting February 23rd to allow water levels upstream of the dam to normalize.



The outlet of the McKeough Floodway diverting floodwaters from the North Branch of the Sydenham River to the St. Clair River.

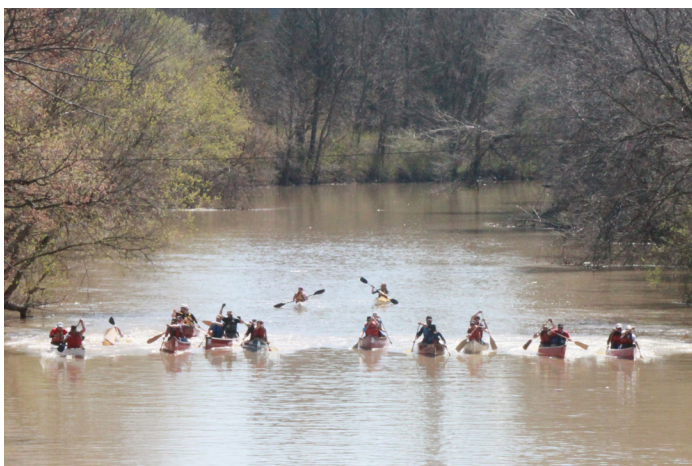


The camping season is almost here – opening weekend for the Authority's three regional campgrounds is April 27th. Park staff are completing facility updates and preparing the sites for another busy camping season. For more information on how to reserve a campsite, visit scrca.on.ca/camping.

Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race

The 44th annual Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race will take place on Sunday, April 22, 2018. The race begins on Mossie Road just west of County Road 79 north of Cairo and features 11 classes and three different race lengths. All classes finish at the Shetland Conservation Area on Bentpath Line (County Road 2).

This event is co-sponsored by the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority and its Foundation. Race participants can choose to collect pledges that will help support outdoor education for school children in the St. Clair region. For more information, visit scrca.on.ca/events.



Sydenham Canoe Race participants raised over \$3,000 for Conservation Education in 2017.

Soil Health Conference Held in Chatham

This February, over 180 people – mainly farmers – came out to the Soil Health Conference co-hosted by the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority and the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority held in Chatham. The conference offered farmers an opportunity to hear the latest findings from experts across North America as well as the practical experiences of local farmers on a variety of soil health topics.



An important message from the conference was that there is no single answer to soil health and nutrient management – it takes a combination of best management practices (BMPs) and that combination changes from farm-to-farm and even year-to-year. Support for the conference was provided in part by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and 12 sponsor organizations.

The Authority offers technical and financial support to farmers interested in adopting BMPs or undertaking stewardship projects. For more information, contact Jessica Van Zwol, Healthy Watershed Specialist, at jvanzwol@scrca.on.ca.



Cover crops were a topic covered during the farmer panel discussions.

Next Conservation Authority Board Meeting

Thursday, April 19, 2018 10:00 am

member of

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority
205 Mill Pond Crescent Strathroy, ON N7G 3P9
o. 519-245-3710, f. 519-245-3348
stclair@scrca.on.ca
scrca.on.ca

