

Conservation Update

June 2019

A Statement From the SCRCA Regarding Provincial Funding Cuts

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) values the long-standing partnership with the Province of Ontario to deliver important services to our local communities. The annual Provincial Transfer Payment provided by the province supports key programs including flood management, mitigation and warning, erosion control projects, municipal plan input regarding natural hazards and resource management, and the administration of the Conservation Authority.

In April 2019, the SCRCA was informed that provincial funding for these programs would be reduced by almost 50% from \$310,000 to \$160,000 for 2019-2020. Although the Authority recognizes the province's commitment to reduce the provincial deficit, we are disappointed in the severity of the cut to Conservation Authorities for these important programs, particularly with Ontario experiencing more severe and frequent weather and flooding events.

Despite the impact these cuts will have on the 2019 budget and beyond, the SCRCA is committed to providing critical flood management and mitigation services to local communities within the watershed. Similar to other Conservation Authorities, however, the SCRCA will be reviewing and evaluating all business areas in light of the recent funding cuts to ensure the province and member municipalities receive clear reporting on the capabilities of Authority programs moving forward.



Our Campgrounds are Open!

The camping season is here! Ensure your summer plans include a trip to one of our three local campgrounds! For more information on how to reserve a campsite, visit www.scrca.on.ca/camping or contact one of our campgrounds directly.

A.W. Campbell Conservation Area – (519) 847-5357
Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area – (519) 882-2280
Warwick Conservation Area – (519) 849-6770

Keep your eyes out for our new Camp St. Clair Visitor's Guide! It can also be accessed online at www.scrca.on.ca.



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Spring Flooding Update

Springtime is often associated with flooding season throughout Ontario. Increased snowmelt, coupled with saturated soils and wet weather results in sometimes severe riverine flooding throughout the province.

Authority staff have been monitoring water levels along the Sydenham River throughout the spring freshet. Higher amounts of precipitation led to the release of 12 Flood Bulletins including 5 Flood Watches and 4 Flood Warnings between April 12th and May 14th. Although flooding was reported in Wallaceburg, levels did not reach the operating criteria for the W. Darcy McKeough dam.



Flooded area along Tile Yard Road just south of Courtright Line.

In addition to meteorological data, the SCRCA monitors a system of 11 stream gauges and five snow sampling sites to assess water levels in the Sydenham River. We work closely with our municipalities to ensure local residents are made aware of impending flood risks or unsafe river conditions.



A tributary of the Sydenham River showing water levels exceeding top of bank in early spring.

St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation Holds Annual General Meeting

The St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation raises funds to support Authority programs and projects. The Foundation held its Annual General Meeting on March 21, 2019. Duncan Skinner was elected President of the Foundation and Norm Giffen was elected Vice President.

The Foundation committed \$92,500 to support a number of Conservation Authority programs including:

- Conservation Education - \$60,000
- Scholarships - \$3,000
- Memorial Forest Tree Planting - \$7,000
- Intern Positions - \$15,000



From left to right: Duncan Skinner, President of the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation presents service awards to Rex Crawford and Lyn Goddard at the Foundation's Annual General Meeting. Both Rex and Lyn have been sitting on the Foundation Board of Directors for 15 years.

SCRCA Launches Tree Fund

In light of the cancellation of the 50 Million Tree Program, the SCRCA is launching the SCRCA Tree Fund in hopes that tree planting efforts will continue beyond 2019.

The SCRCA has partnered with Forests Ontario in the delivery of the 50 Million Tree Program since 2008. The goal of this program was to plant 50 million trees throughout Ontario by 2025. In the St. Clair Region, that translated to an investment of \$700,000 and the planting of over 515,000 trees!

The goal of the SCRCA Tree Fund is to secure enough funding to plant 40,000 seedlings.



Authority staff busy unloading this year's delivery of large stock trees and seedlings. Many of these trees were purchased as part of the 50 Million Tree program. While current projects for this year are still supported, the cancellation of the 50 Million Tree Program will impact our tree planting program in 2020 and beyond.

Sydenham River Watershed Phosphorus Management Plan

Through funding provided by Environment and Climate Change Canada, the SCRCA is coordinating the development of a Phosphorus Management Plan for the Sydenham River watershed to reduce the impact of this nutrient on the Great Lakes basin. Phosphorus is an element that is essential to life but when it becomes available in excessive amounts in freshwater environments it can cause algal blooms and hypoxic (low oxygen) conditions. This severely degrades the water quality of lakes and rivers and can impact the safety of water for drinking, recreation, and wildlife. The objective of this multi-year project is to work with local stakeholders and First Nations to identify sources of phosphorus, collect and analyze available data, and determine the most cost-effective solutions for the watershed.

In November, the SCRCA hosted an initial meeting to introduce the project and receive direction from stakeholders, First Nations, and community members. Preliminary feedback from this meeting also led to the formation of the committees that will guide the development of the management plan.



Over 65 people were in attendance representing a variety of interests including municipalities, counties, First Nation communities, government agencies, agriculture, among others.

Open Houses held for the St. Clair River Sediment Management Project

Residents of Sarnia, Courtright, and Wallaceburg as well as Walpole Island and Aamjiwnaang First Nations were given updates on the current status of the St. Clair River Sediment Management Project in mid-April.

With the project entering the Detailed Engineering and Design Plan Phase, representatives from the federal and provincial government along with SCRCA Project Manager, Mike Moroney, provided an overview of the tasks and timelines associated with this phase of the project. Expected to take two years, the Detailed Engineering and Design Plan Phase of the project will determine the logistics of the sediment remediation and include a comprehensive estimate of costs.

In December, the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority was granted funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada; the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; and Dow Canada to initiate a Detailed Engineering and Design Plan for the management of three pockets of contaminated sediment in the St. Clair River.

More information will be available on the St. Clair River Sediment Management Project website (www.stclairsediment.ca) as the project progresses.

Mike Moroney, Project Manager at the SCRCA, discusses the Detailed Engineering and Design Plan Phase of the St. Clair River Sediment Management Project at an open house held in Sarnia, Ontario.



PC - Sharon Nethercott

Next Conservation Authority Board Meeting

Thursday, June 27, 2019 1:00 pm
Warwick Conservation Area

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