

Conservation Update

September 2019

A Response to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

On the evening of Friday, August 16, 2019, the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) along with all Conservation Authorities in the province received a letter from the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Jeff Yurek. In his letter, he requested that Conservation Authorities prepare and plan to “wind down” programs that fall outside their core-mandate.

Conservation Authorities (CA) are governed by the provincial *Conservation Authorities Act*. Recent changes (currently awaiting proclamation) have identified five programs and services that fall within our core-mandate:

1. Risk of natural hazards
2. Conservation and management of CA owned or controlled lands
3. Drinking water source protection
4. Protection of the Lake Simcoe watershed
5. Other programs or services, as prescribed by regulation.

Programs identified by Minister Yurek and considered “non-core” include water quality monitoring, tree planting, conservation education and the SCRCA’s Healthy Watershed Program which helps landowners implement projects on their property to reduce runoff and maintain healthy soils. These programs support those listed in the Act but also offer additional benefits such as increased forest cover and carbon storage, flood mitigation, habitat for Species at Risk (SAR), recreational and educational opportunities, and reducing phosphorus runoff into Lake Erie.

The SCRCA is extremely disappointed by the recent announcements and directive communicated by the Province and are concerned about the impact these actions will have on our local environment and communities.



We’re Going Online!

With the exception of seasonal camping at all three campgrounds and group camping at the A.W. Campbell Conservation Area, campsite reservations can be made through our website beginning in January 2020. Stay tuned for more information regarding our online reservation system as the New Year approaches!



Follow us on Facebook and Twitter
Check out our website at scrca.on.ca

3rd Annual Turtle-y Awesome Birthday Celebration

It was a beautiful day for a birthday party!

For the 3rd year, St. Clair biologists held their "Turtle-y Awesome" turtle birthday party at the A.W. Campbell Conservation Area. Aside from having fun, the purpose of this annual celebration is to educate visitors about local turtle species and what the SCRCA is doing to protect them.



Party-goers had the opportunity to meet some of the hatchlings before they were released. Pictured here – an Eastern Spiny Softshell turtle whose species holds an endangered status in Ontario.

There are eight species of turtle native to Ontario and all eight are Species at Risk. To support populations, our biologists rescue turtle eggs they encounter that are under imminent threat of destruction or predation and incubate them at Salthaven Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Centre or Upper Thames River Conservation Authority.

This summer, almost 1000 eggs have been rescued and our staff are currently working on releasing the new hatchlings at the same locations their eggs were found. This program helps get the turtles past their first hurdle towards survival.

Our 2019 party was another big success with approximately 100 people attending and participating in turtle crafts and games and meeting some of the hatchlings before they were released back into the environment.



Guests were invited to participate in a number of activities including trying to find and extract turtle eggs out of their sandy nest (pictured far left) or decorating their very own turtle shells (middle). And what's a party without cake! Our visitors were also invited to enjoy a sweet birthday treat while they learned about Ontario's turtle species (pictured far right).

Infrastructure Canada Supports Shoreline Work Along Lake Huron and the St. Clair River

The SCRCA has been granted \$8 million in funding over 10 years by Infrastructure Canada through the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund (DMAF) to support the rehabilitation of structural and natural shoreline assets along Lake Huron and the St. Clair River.

Over the last three decades, the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority has completed numerous shoreline protection and erosion control projects along Lake Huron and the St. Clair River to protect local communities. As a result of elevated water levels, high winds, ice jams, significant rain events and climate change, several shoreline failures have occurred which are threatening important infrastructure in the City of Sarnia and St. Clair Township (e.g., roads, schools and parks). These failures have also created safety concerns for users of the shoreline.

The contribution from the Government of Canada has been matched by the City of Sarnia and St. Clair Township in the amount of \$12 million. Once completed, this project will strengthen Sarnia and St. Clair Township's resilience to extreme weather and flooding and reduce economic losses along shorelines resulting from these events.



On August 27, 2019, Member of Parliament for London West, Kate Young announced the funding on behalf of the Government of Canada.



What a Catch!

Staff caught more than they bargained for while searching for Species at Risk in Lake Huron. Although the focus of their efforts was fish related, any other type of SAR discovered is always documented (like the snapping turtle pictured to the left)! The current monitoring was conducted to see what species of fish were using coastal wetlands along the Lake Huron shoreline.

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority and Foundation Board of Directors and staff were saddened to hear of the passing of Bill Bilton, Councillor at the Township of Dawn-Euphemia, and long standing Director of the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation. Our deepest condolences go out to Bill's family and friends. The SCRCA will be planting a tree in his memory.

Bill Bilton
1936 – 2019



2019 Conservation Scholarship Winners

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority is pleased to congratulate the 2019 winners of our Conservation Scholarships.

A.W. Campbell Memorial Scholarship

Kevin Robertson, Great Lakes Secondary School
Abigail Irwin, Lambton Central Collegiate & Vocational School

Tony Stranak Conservation Scholarship

Madeline Morrison, St. Patrick's Catholic High School

Mary Jo Arnold Conservation Scholarship

Laura Benedict, Strathroy District Collegiate Institute

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority offers scholarships for graduating high school students who are pursuing post-secondary studies in a conservation-related field and who live or attend a school within the SCRCA's jurisdiction. The scholarships are provided by trust funds established through the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation.

Our 2019 winners were presented with their awards by Chair, Joe Faas and Vice-Chair, Larry Gordon at the June Board of Directors meeting. We wish them all the very best and a successful year!



The 2019 SCRCA Conservation Scholarship Winners (from left to right): Kevin Robertson, Abigail Irwin, Madeline Morrison and Laura Benedict.



PC - Sharon Nethercott

Next Conservation Authority Board Meeting

Thursday, September 19, 2019 10:00 am

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority

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