

# Conservation Update

April 2020



## St. Clair Region Conservation Authority COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered how we go about our day-to-day lives. The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) is committed to supporting our communities and delivering essential services during this challenging time while abiding by recommendations put forth by local, provincial and federal health authorities.

Our offices are currently closed to the public and staff are working remotely from home. We ask that members of the public communicate with Authority staff by telephone or email. Planning and regulation services are on-going, however, some delay in response time should be anticipated.

We want to ensure our communities and member municipalities that flood forecasting and warning operations will not be compromised during this time as evidenced during the March 27<sup>th</sup> flood event that included the distribution of five flood bulletins and the closure of the McKeough Dam.

Currently, trails at SCRCA Conservation Areas remain open to the public, however, trail maintenance may be limited. Washroom facilities, playgrounds, picnic facilities and other recreational facilities (e.g., volleyball courts, mini putt) are closed, and gates will be locked. The SCRCA is prepared to close conservation areas if deemed necessary for the health and safety of our communities.

The 2020 camping season has been delayed. The opening of the season will be determined based on the guidance of health officials.

We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience this may cause and appreciate your understanding and cooperation. For more information, please visit [www.scrca.on.ca/COVID-19](http://www.scrca.on.ca/COVID-19).



Create a "MUDsterpiece" by mixing soil and water!

## Family Nature Fun Activities

Looking for some outdoor fun to do with your kids, while also adhering to 'social distancing' practices? Our conservation educators are working on fun activities that you and your family can do during this time that will keep you connected to nature. Keep an eye out for our posts on Facebook and Twitter, or visit [www.scrca.on.ca/familynaturefun](http://www.scrca.on.ca/familynaturefun), over the coming weeks!



**Follow us on Facebook and Twitter**  
Check out our website at [scrca.on.ca](http://scrca.on.ca)

## SCRCA Holds Annual General Meeting

The SCRCA held its 2020 Annual General Meeting on February 27, 2020, in Forest. Authority Chair Joe Faas reflected on the challenges the organization faced in 2019. Record floods impacted not only the St. Clair Region but many communities throughout Ontario. At the same time, provincial transfer payments that supported flood management and floodplain regulation programs were cut by 50% and the mandate of Conservation Authorities became a topic of debate.

Regardless, the SCRCA celebrated many accomplishments in 2019 including:

- Securing \$8 million to support shoreline protection projects along Lake Huron and the St. Clair River;
- Planting of over 68,000 trees;
- The initiation of the Detailed Engineering and Design Plan phase for management of the remaining areas of contaminated sediment in the St. Clair River;
- The release of almost 800 turtle hatchlings into the Sydenham River, and;
- The participation of over 12,000 students in the SCRCA's Conservation Education programs.

Three Conservation Awards were presented to deserving community members who have significantly contributed to the environmental health of the St. Clair Region.

Al and Lisa Nogueira are private landowners who were recognized for the stewardship work they have implemented on their property located along the north branch of the Sydenham River. Since 2007, 6,000 trees have been planted on their property. In addition, Al and Lisa have incorporated Phragmites control practices to eradicate current infestations on their land and prevent the re-establishment of this invasive grass.



Samuel Somerville receives his Conservation Award from Vice-Chair Larry Gordon.



2020 Chair, Joe Faas (left) and Larry Gordon, 2020 Vice-Chair (right)

Samuel Somerville and Austen Wong were recognized for their volunteer work during the summer of 2019. Samuel and Austen donated their time this past summer to assist the Biology department with their fish and turtle monitoring programs. In addition, both men helped complete data entry and organized outreach events.

Joe Faas, representing the Regional Municipality of Chatham-Kent was re-elected Chair of the SCRCA while Larry Gordon, who represents the Village of Point Edward was re-elected Vice-Chair.

## Soil Health Day

The second Soil Health Day conference was held at the Brooke-Alvinston-Inwood Community Centre on February 12<sup>th</sup>. Funded through the Canadian Nature Fund administered by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the event focused on the current action plans for phosphorus load reductions in the Lake Erie watershed. Other topics included the conservation and protection of the biological diversity of the Sydenham River watershed.

Nearly 100 farmers, agricultural industry, municipal, government and conservation representatives were in attendance for the one-day event. Local, national and international speakers presented their research related to phosphorus modelling, phosphorus reducing best management practices (BMPs), soil health and carbon sequestration.



Steve Groff, Cover Crop Coach and Founder of the Pennsylvania based organization, Cover Crop Coaching and Cover Crop Innovators, joined via video conference to present his research related to cover crops, planting green and the importance of improving soil health.

Bryan Page, Research Biologist at Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) shared the results of DUC's one-year study investigating the role of newly restored wetlands on phosphorus retention.



SCRCA staff also organized two workshops earlier in the year. The Wetland and Phosphorus Workshop was held at the SCRCA administration office on January 14<sup>th</sup> and the Nutrient Management Workshop was held on January 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Brooke-Alvinston-Inwood Community Centre. The two workshops attracted 33 and 25 participants, respectively.



## Supporting Conservation Education



Each March, our educators offer a Spring Water Awareness Program (SWAP) that teaches children about the hazards of spring floodwaters and the importance of avoiding these dangerous situations. For the second year, our 2020 programming was made available free-of-charge to local schools thanks to a generous donation by Plains Midstream Canada (from left to right: Ian Forster, Community Relations Advisor for Plains Midstream Canada; Sharon Nethercott, SCRCA Conservation Education Coordinator; Brian McDougall, SCRCA General Manager).



The Lambton Upland Game Bird club has once again provided a generous donation to support SCRCA conservation education programs. The funds will go towards trail upgrades at the Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area to keep students, teachers and staff safe while exploring the natural world. The SCRCA is very appreciative of their continued support.

## Operation of the W. Darcy McKeough Floodway – March 29, 2020

On March 29<sup>th</sup>, the W. Darcy McKeough Floodway was put into operation for the third time since late October 2019. Sustained strong wind gusts and high rainfall caused water levels in Wallaceburg to overflow the streambank and move into the surrounding floodplain. In response the McKeough floodgates were closed. The gates remained closed until the following morning.



PC - Sharon Nethercott

### Next Conservation Authority Board Meeting

Thursday, April 16, 2020 10:00 am  
(Subject to change due to the COVID-19 pandemic)

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