

Conservation Update

June 2020

SCRCA Field Trips Go Virtual

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers across the St. Clair Region have turned to online platforms to reach their students. To support local educators, the SCRCA conservation education team has launched a series of virtual field trips to the Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area located just outside of Petrolia.

The virtual field trips are free-of-charge and cover a range of grade-specific, curriculum-connected concepts including biodiversity and wetland ecosystems. Some of the field trips are available in French to accommodate French speaking school boards.

During the school year, the SCRCA offers a variety of hands-on, outdoor and in-class programs to elementary and secondary schools. The Authority has also become an important certification provider for the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program – an Ontario-wide program offered to high school students that provide them with the opportunity to focus on skills related to a specific career path.

For more information on the SCRCA's Conservation Education programs and virtual field trips, contact Sharon Nethercott (snethercott@scrca.on.ca) or Melissa Levi (mlevi@scrca.on.ca) at (519) 882-2399 or visit the SCRCA webpage at www.scrca.on.ca.



Sharon Nethercott, Conservation Education Coordinator at the SCRCA, leads a group of students to the pond at the Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area. In 2019, over 12,000 students participated in conservation education programming offered by the Authority.

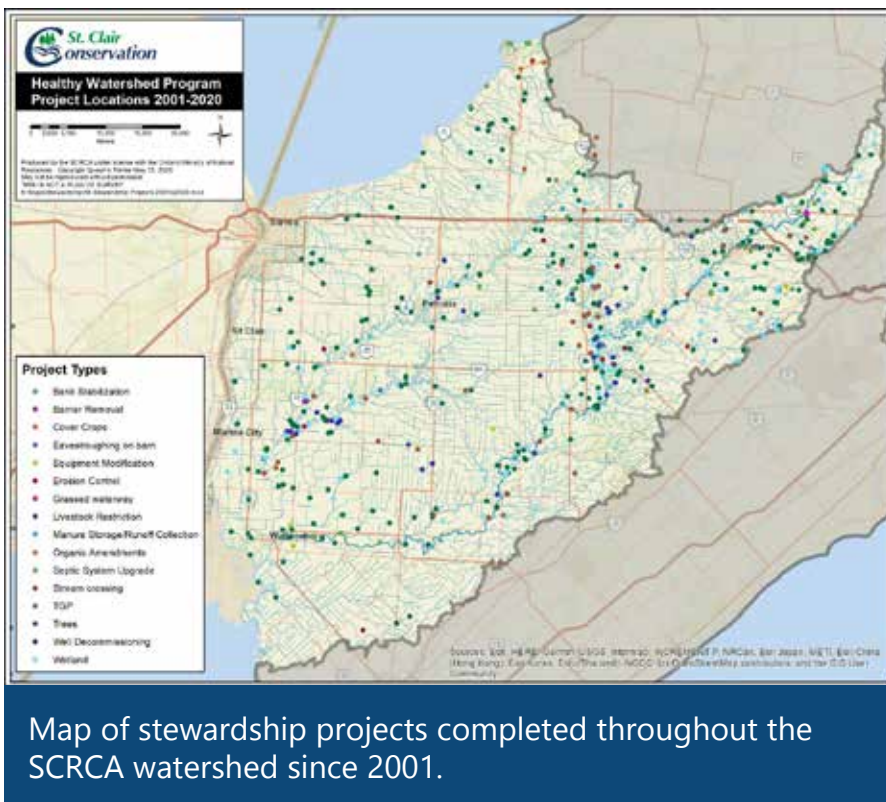


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20 Years of Stewardship – The Sydenham River Habitat Stewardship Program

It has been another successful year of implementing stewardship projects within the St. Clair Region watershed! Nearly 43 hectares (106 acres) of land was conserved, restored or enhanced to benefit water quality, connect wildlife habitat, and improve aquatic habitat in and along tributaries of the Sydenham River. Thanks to the dedication of private landowners, numerous projects were completed including the creation of wetlands and erosion control features, the installation of livestock fencing and the planting of riparian buffers and over 50,000 trees!

Every year, SCRCA staff seek out funding opportunities to offset project costs for local landowners. This past year saw support from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (through the Aquatic Habitat Stewardship Program and the Canadian Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk), Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Rural Lambton Stewardship Network, Wildlife Habitat Canada, the 50 Million Tree Program and private businesses.



In the coming weeks and months, staff will be completing site visits (following social distancing protocols) with landowners who are interested in implementing habitat restoration projects on their land. If you are interested in having a project completed on your property, such as a wetland, block tree planting, or riparian buffer, please contact Jessica Van Zwol (jvanzwol@scrca.on.ca or 519-245-3710).

While we look forward to meeting landowners once again, the current break from the "day-to-day" has allowed us to look back at the success of our stewardship program through the years. Over the last 20 years, stewardship in the St. Clair Region has resulted in:

- Over 1,160 hectares (2,866 acres) of retired land converted into wetlands, trees and buffers;
- The creation or enhancement of over 105 wetlands;
- 315 tree planting projects;
- 72 nutrient management projects;
- 60 tallgrass prairie projects;
- 35 erosion control projects;
- The decommissioning of 15 wells;
- 7 clean water diversion projects; and
- The completion of 2 in-water habitat improvement projects.



Phased-in Opening of the SCRCA 2020 Camping Season

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) has initiated a phased-in approach to opening the 2020 camping season at their three regional campgrounds. On Friday, June 5th, seasonal campers were permitted to access their sites for overnight stays at the A.W. Campbell, Lorne C. Henderson and Warwick Conservation Areas.

To ensure the health and safety of our guests and staff, all swimming pools will be closed for the duration of the 2020 season and recreational facilities will be reduced. In addition, washroom and shower facilities will remain closed until further notice. Campers are asked to use the washroom facilities in their trailers.

Non-seasonal, transient camping is cancelled through to June 28th. All reservations made prior to and including June 28th will be automatically refunded. SCRCA staff continue to follow provincial guidelines and will open campgrounds to transient camping when permitted and when all necessary safety precautions are in place. Campers are also reminded that opening dates are subject to change based on the status of the on-going pandemic and recommendations by local health authorities.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the SCRCA has encouraged visits to local conservation areas. Visitors are reminded that facilities including washrooms, play structures and picnic areas are closed and that they must comply with social distancing practices outlined by local health authorities and the provincial and federal governments.

The SCRCA thanks our camping community for their patience and understanding as we have navigated through the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Socially Distanced 2020 Spring Tree Planting Underway!

Spring tree planting is almost complete throughout the St. Clair Region watershed. In total, 50,000 seedlings and 50 large stock trees will be planted by SCRCA crews over the coming weeks. In addition, 6,000 seedlings and 600 large stock trees were supplied directly to local landowners.

Tree planting projects are supported through a number of provincial, federal and community grants to offset the cost of planting trees on local landowner properties. For the 2020 tree planting season, \$176,000 in support has been provided by Forests Ontario, Chatham-Kent ALUS Program, County of Lambton Tree Replacement Fund, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Enbridge Inc., and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Canada Nature Fund and Habitat Stewardship Program).



Ron Schenk – 1961 -2020

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority Board of Directors and staff were saddened to hear of the passing of Ron Schenk, Councillor at the Town of Plympton-Wyoming. Ron joined the SCRCA in 2019 and provided the board with a fresh and insightful perspective during his short time with the Authority. Our deepest condolences go out to Ron's family, friends, and community. The SCRCA will be planting a tree in his memory.

Next Conservation Authority Board Meeting

Thursday, June 18, 2020 10:00 am
(Virtual Meeting)

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority

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