



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Date: June 18, 2020

Time: 10:03 am

Remote via Zoom

Directors Present: John Brennan, Al Broad, Pat Brown, Andy Bruziewicz, Terry Burrell, Joe Faas, Chair; Larry Gordon, Vice-Chair; Aaron Hall, Frank Kennes, Betty Ann MacKinnon, Kevin Marriott, Netty McEwen, Mark McGill, Dan McMillan, Steve Miller, Frank Nemcek, Mike Stark, Jerry Westgate

Regrets: Brad Loosley, Lorie Scott

Staff Present: Donna Blue, Manager of Communications; Chris Durand, Manager of GIS and IT; Melissa Deisley, Regulations Officer; Ashley Fletcher, Administrative Assistant/ Board Coordinator; Brian McDougall, General Manager; Tim Payne, Manager of Forestry; Tracy Prince, Director of Finance; Girish Sankar, Director of Water Resources; Greg Wilcox, Manager of Conservation Areas

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. A moment of silence was observed in memory of Ron Schenk. Thoughts and prayers go out to his family at this time.

It was requested that each Director declare a conflict of interest at the appropriate time, on any item within this agenda in that a Director may have pecuniary interest.

BD-20-48

Burrell – Hall

“That the Board of Directors adopts the agenda for the meeting as presented.”

CARRIED

Minutes of the Special Meeting held on May 7, 2020 were reviewed.

BD-20-49

Brown – Burrell

“That the minutes of the Special Meeting, held May 7, 2020, be approved as distributed.”

CARRIED

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting held on May 7, 2020 were reviewed.

BD-20-50

Nemcek – Stark

“That the minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, held May 7, 2020, be approved as distributed.”

CARRIED

COVID-19:

- Our overall situation has not changed dramatically since our last meeting
- Staff continue to be very quick in responding to the small changes occurring all but daily during this crisis. I am proud of how our staff have handled this situation and am very happy that we have all remained healthy to date in this crisis
- Two major program areas have dealt with the crisis and are operating
 - Tree planting is complete (see report 7.1h)
 - Conservation Area Campgrounds are open to seasonal campers (see report 7.1 b)
- Other program areas continue to operate from home with some office access
- 2 senior staff are rotating in the office for full days every day
- Other staff have truly stepped up in working from home
 - Planning and Regulations staff – already short 2 full time staff and have been working overtime to try to keep up with the deluge of applications that continue to come in
 - Conservation Education staff have create virtual visit programs that have received multiple accolades (see report 7.1p)
- Acting Planning and Regulations Managers and I will be proceeding to interviews with candidates for the vacant Manager and Planner positions as well as a maternity leave fill for the Clerk/ Regulations Technician position as soon as possible to relieve some of the workload, overburden and improve response times and customer service
- Reviews of staffing needs are ongoing within each department
 - Summer staff hires have been limited to skeleton requirements
 - Vacant positions have not been filled until required
 - Other options continue to be reviewed that would assist in reducing financial deficit and ensuring that staff are put into situations where they can excel
- Many of the discussions with the Province have been placed on the back burner with a focus on COVID-19 actions
- The attached COVID-19 Return To Work Plan is the first for a Conservation Authority in the Province and was circulated to all Conservation Authorities upon request
- We continue to have straight forward objectives and we are endeavoring to be thorough but practical in our common sense actions in re-opening the office and continuing to expand field work and services in Conservation Areas

The COVID-19 Response 2020 Return to Work Plan was reviewed.

Director's Comments:

Director Dan McMillan commended the efforts of General Manager, Brian McDougall on the completeness and timeliness of this document.

BD-20-51

Miller – Marriott

“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the General Manager’s report, dated June 9, 2020 and further acknowledges and accepts the COVID-19 Return to Work Plan dated June 1, 2020 and implemented on June 10, 2020.”

CARRIED

A verbal update was given by General Manager, Brian McDougall. Conservation Ontario (CO) has been working diligently to verify the eligibility of Conservation Authorities (CAs) under the various government relief programs that are being announced such as Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS). CO continues to advocate on behalf of CAs with provincial and federal levels of government regarding the need for infrastructure funding. Due to COVID-19, CO Council has been unable to hold a meeting in 2020, however it is hoped that Ontario’s emergency orders will have ceased by the next scheduled meeting on September 28, 2020.

BD-20-52

Hall - Marriott

“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the verbal update on the actions of Conservation Ontario.”

CARRIED

BD-20-53

Burrell – Stark

“That the Board of Directors approves the consent agenda and endorses the recommendations accompanying Items 7.1 a - 7.1 r.”

CARRIED

Regarding BD-18-144

SCRCA staff suggest having Project Consultants present to the Board of Directors meeting in order to walk through the guidelines on the development of flood lines.

Deferred to September, 2020

Regarding BD-20-31

It is requested that staff prepare a report for the June 2020 meeting providing a dollar value for all cost-saving measures related to the COVID-19 Action Plan that have been applied or implemented and the impact these will have on the existing budget.

Please refer to Item 11.2

Regarding BD-20-35

On April 7, 2020 we received a formal request for ownership of Shetland CA from The Corporation of the Township of Dawn-Euphemia. A full report on the property will be prepared for a future board meeting.

Deferred to September, 2020

(a) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report on Business Arising dated June 14, 2020.

Timeline:

SCRCA Media Release, April 8

- Camping Season delayed
- Overnight transient camping reservations refunded for April 24 to May 13
- Gates locked, walk-in trail access for public, seasonal campers have walk-in access only to check on property

Province allows “snowbirds” to occupy seasonal campsites, April 17

- A. campsites are made available only for trailers and recreational vehicles that are either:
 - i. used by individuals who do not have another residence in Canada and are in need of housing during the emergency period
 - ii. permitted to be there by the terms of a full season contract
- B. only campsites with electricity, water service and facilities for sewage disposal are provided for use
- C. all recreational facilities in the campground, and all other shared facilities in the campground such as washrooms, are closed

SCRCA Media Release, April 22

- Campgrounds will open April 24 to current seasonal campers that meet provincial criteria
- Washrooms and all recreational facilities remain closed
- Trails remain open
- Campers occupy AW Campbell and Warwick Conservation Areas, gates unlocked and barricaded to allow emergency vehicle access

SCRCA Media Release, May 1

- Recreational camping continues to be delayed
- Overnight transient camping reservations refunded through May 31

Province Announces Campgrounds May Open, May 14

As soon as 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, May 16, 2020:

- Private parks and campgrounds may open to enable preparation for the season and to allow access for trailers and recreational vehicles whose owners have a full season contract.

SCRCA Media Release, May 15

- Only site occupants continue to be “snowbirds”
- Gates open 8-4 daily starting May 19 providing vehicular access to seasonal campers only to check on trailers and maintain sites
- No recreational camping activities

SCRCA Media Release, May 26

- Announce phase-in of recreational camping
- Seasonal camping only to open June 5
- Overnight transient reservations refunded through June 10
- No public washrooms at this time
- No pools for the 2020 season
- Restricted activities to meet current Covid-19 guidelines

SCRCA Media Release, June 5

- Overnight transient reservations refunded through June 28

Ongoing Preparation for Overnight Camping and Easing of COVID-19 Restrictions

Staff are monitoring provincial and local health guidelines to develop policies and procedures to safely operate the campgrounds during the 2020 season. SCRCA will adopt the following recommendations from the Provincial workplace guidelines for campgrounds during Covid-19:

- Limiting overnight (transient) stays and capacity, with no adjacent sites occupied at the same time (we are closing approximately every other transient site)
- Encouraging contactless transactions
- Close group camping
- Enhanced sanitization protocols and increased cleaning frequency when washrooms open
- Enhanced cleaning of common touch surfaces
- Closed pools for the season
- Closed or restricted use of common areas and recreational facilities
- Cancelled camper group events
- Some closures and restrictions will be modified as COVID-19 restrictions are eased

Financial Impact:

Details of the seasonal camping season including current restrictions were provided to campers in late May. A small number of seasonal campsites were vacated after the gates were opened. Staff are rehabilitating those sites and will fill from existing waiting lists. Seasonal sites are expected to be filled to capacity in 2020.

Fee Type	Original 2020 Fee	Season Length	Adjusted Fee
Seasonal Permit	\$2380	20 weeks (-215, pool closure)	\$1768.40
Weekly Pump-out	\$425	20 weeks	\$354.20
Bi-weekly Pump-out	\$225	20 weeks	\$187.60
Golf Cart	\$200	20 weeks	\$166.60
Exterior Fridge	\$175	20 weeks	\$145.80

Reduced Seasonal Revenues:

Fee Type	Fee Reduction	Estimated # of Users	Loss of Revenue (including taxes)
Seasonal Permit	\$611.60	420	\$256,872
Weekly Pump-out	\$70.80	10	\$708
Bi-weekly Pump-out	\$37.40	250	\$9,350
Golf Cart	\$33.40	190	\$6,346
Exterior Fridge	\$29.20	70	\$2,044
		Total	\$275,320

Transient revenue loss is more difficult to estimate. We are restricting our sites to approximately 50% capacity. The start date for the season is unknown at this time. Estimated annual revenue is approximately \$250,000 before taxes. This will be reduced by more than half in 2020.

(b) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the Conservation Campgrounds Update report dated June 6, 2020.

Highlights

- Flood threat is moderate due to high water levels on the Great Lakes, Lake St. Clair and in Wallaceburg
- Lake Huron exceeded its April 1986 mean water level record by 7 cm, while Lake St. Clair exceeded its record by 9 cm
- Water levels for Lakes Huron and St. Clair are projected to exceed record levels over the next 5 months
- Overall regional averages do not substantially deviate from normal conditions, however further reduced precipitation in the coming months may result in an early indication of a potential drought condition

Flood Threat

The current flood threat is moderate owing to sustained high water levels in the Great Lakes, Lake St. Clair, St. Clair River, and the Sydenham River at Wallaceburg. Previously considered minimal amounts of rainfall will have the capacity to elevate water levels into natural floodplain areas, and Wallaceburg will be more susceptible to wind-driven flooding.

- May 2020 mean water levels in Wallaceburg are 5.4 cm higher than May 2019 (to date); April was 18.5 cm higher
- As of this report, water levels are currently sitting 1 cm above the top of the bank

Great Lakes Levels

- Lakes Huron, St. Clair and Erie exceeded all mean records in April
- Mean water levels on Lakes Huron and St. Clair are forecasted to increase in May 2020, with Lake Erie falling slightly
- Lake Huron and Lake St. Clair are projected to exceed record-high water levels over the next 5 months

Precipitation Conditions

- Monthly rainfall amounts for the last quarter are below normal values for all areas aside from London and Windsor in March
- Rainfall averages for all periods are below normal with the exception of Strathroy and London over the past 12 months
- Overall regional averages do not substantially deviate from normal conditions, however further reduced precipitation in the coming months may result in an early indication of a potential drought condition

(c) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated May 26, 2020 on the current watershed conditions and Great Lakes water levels.

- SCRCA staff (Nicholas Hagerty and Justin Greenside) have been surveying this Spring
- Survey work includes surveying cross-sections of creek and measuring culverts and bridges
- All Survey work has been completed for Phase 1 and Phase 2 work.
- Phase 1 mapping work
 - City of Sarnia and St. Clair Township watersheds
- Phase 2 mapping work
 - The rest of the SCRCA watershed
- Hydrologic Analysis and Modelling has been completed and draft flood lines have been developed by Riggs Engineering.
- Quality control of the draft flood lines are currently being undertaken by Riggs Engineering.
- All mapping work is expected to be completed before June 30, 2020.

(d) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated June 4, 2020 on the update to survey work and floodplain mapping project.

WECI 2020-2021 Projects:

- SCRCA had submitted three projects for WECI 2020 - 2021 program
- A total of 115 projects have been submitted from 30 CA's
- All applications have been reviewed by a committee of Provincial and

Conservation Authority staff representatives

- All submitted projects are scored based on established WECl scoring guidelines.
- SCRCA was **not successful** in WECl funding this year
- SCRCA repair projects scored 120 and 125 points respectively
- All projects over 135 points were awarded funding.

Courtright Waterfront Park – Phase 3

- All revetment work and restoration work is completed.
- Trees have been planted along the shoreline
- Grass is starting to establish along the park
- SCRCA staff are seeking input from the municipality over project deficiencies, if any

Bright's Grove Shoreline Erosion Control Projects: Three Locations

(1) Brights Grove, Kenwick Street to Helen Avenue – Phase 2

- Cope Construction commenced shoreline work in December 2019 and remains underway.
- All in - water work has been completed as of March 31, 2020
- Toe stones were inspected using a professional diver in May 2020.
- A few toe stones needs to be repaired
- Revetment work is continuing along the shoreline
- High water levels posing construction challenges and reducing the work days.

(2) Brights Grove, Kenwick Street to Helen Avenue – Phase 3

- Construction work has been temporarily stopped due to the in-water timing window restrictions.
- Work to resume on July 15, 2020.

(3) Brights Grove, Old Lakeshore Road East

- Facca Incorporated Inc. started shoreline work on February 10, 2020.
- Approximately 40 meters of in -water work has been completed
- Significant project delays due to bad weather and quarry unable to deliver rocks as per engineer specification
- Construction work has been temporarily stopped due to the in- water timing window restrictions.
- Work to resume on July 15, 2020.

Brights Grove shoreline continues to be severely impacted due to high water levels, a number of recent failures have been identified. Shoreline work should proceed to prevent the Old Lakeshore Road from undermining. SCRCA has submitted another emergency application to DFO on April 17th to allow us to continue with in-water shoreline revetment work. Staff have provided information requested by DFO and continue to seek approval for in-water work exemption. However, we are still awaiting an approval from DFO and MNRF to this emergency shoreline work.

(e) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated June 4, 2020 on the ongoing Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure projects across the watershed and further acknowledges the updates on the WECl funding for 2020.

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) is continuing to lead the work to develop a detailed engineering and design plan for managing the contaminated sediment in the three remaining priority areas of the St. Clair River. Funding for this project has been provided by Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and Dow Canada. The parties that provided funding are actively participating in oversight of the project work through a Sediment Management Oversight Committee.

Parsons Inc., the consulting firm that has been retained by the SCRCA to prepare the engineering and design plan, is continuing with its work on preparing the plan. Parsons subcontracted the field work component to Pollutech EnviroQuatics Limited, a firm with experience in providing environmental consulting and ecotoxicity services.

Due to inclement weather, the amount of field work that was to occur in fall 2019 had to be reduced from what was originally planned. Pollutech was able to collect surface sediment samples and measure water velocity to assist with assessing sediment stability, and was able to collect a number of deeper core sediment samples in Priority Area 1 to measure contaminant concentrations.

Project Update:

Following completion of the fall 2019 field work, the consultant shared information with the SCRCA on the preliminary results and developed a plan for conducting the next round of field work in 2020. The SCRCA is currently reviewing the consultant's plan. Work that remains includes more deep core sediment sampling and the use of an underwater camera, as opposed to a diver, to assess the condition of structures in the area.

The engineering consultant has identified some areas where additional work may be required. The SCRCA worked closely with the engineering consultant and the Sediment Management Oversight Committee to address these challenges and has identified a path forward to ensure that the project work is completed within the established project budget.

Due to the implementation of measures in March 2020 by Canada and Ontario to reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus, the engineering consultant has had to reassess their procedures for conducting field work to ensure that provincial guidelines and legislative requirements are followed.

The consultant has advised that they anticipate being able to conduct the next round of field work in mid-June 2020. The SCRCA has requested submission of a revised project schedule from Parsons to confirm whether project delays due to COVID-19 will impact the project completion date.

Obtaining information on the various pipeline crossings in the vicinity of the areas of contaminated sediment is an important part of the project work. The SCRCA held separate teleconference meetings in March 2020 with the engineering consultant and each of the pipeline owners to confirm what information is available on the location of each of the pipelines, and any restrictions when performing work in close proximity to the pipelines. Information provided as a result of these meetings is being assessed to determine where any information gaps remain and next steps.

Finance:

Funds provided by Environment and Climate Change Canada for fiscal year 2019/20 for the engineering consultant work have been fully utilized as planned. Funds made available through the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and Dow Canada, however, have not been fully utilized and will be carried over into fiscal year 2020/21. The need to carry over these funds was the result of delays in the consultant being able to complete all of the planned field work in fall 2019.

The SCRCA’s project manager is continuing to monitor the progress of the consultant’s work closely and is tracking progress against key deliverables, costs and timelines.

(f) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated June 4, 2020 on the Management of Contaminated Sediment in the St. Clair River.

Through financial support provided by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) is coordinating the development of a Phosphorus Management Plan for the Sydenham Watershed to reduce the impact of this nutrient on the Great Lakes basin and improve the health of the local ecosystem. Phosphorus 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 coordinate with local stakeholders, First Nations, and community members to identify sources of phosphorus and determine best-value solutions for our region. A community engagement and outreach strategy will be developed to implement the Management Plan.

Progress since February 2020 board report:

Date	Item	Details
Ongoing	SCRCA Project Team Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conducting/compiling research and collecting data based on direction from committees • Staff drafting reports that will provide the basis for chapter content • Staff attended and hosted local rural water quality events

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff completed and submitted 2019-20 annual grant reporting to ECCC • Staff participating on the Lake Erie Action Plan Implementation Committee; Agricultural and Natural Heritage Subcommittees
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The SCRC Project Team is compiling feedback from the committee meetings and one-on-one discussions with committee members to direct ongoing research. This information is being investigated, discussed at meetings, and incorporated into the draft Management Plan.

Upcoming committee meetings:

- Point Source Working Group Meeting
- Non-Point Source Working Group Meeting

Strategic Objectives:

The Phosphorus Management Plan is a project that ties into our existing programs and will help us to meet our strategic objective to focus on programs that reduce the loading of phosphorus to the Great Lakes in order to protect, manage, and restore our natural systems.

Goal 2:

“Protect, manage, and restore our natural systems including woodlands, wetlands, waterways, and lakes.”

Strategic Actions:

“Develop New Tools to Promote Stewardship Practices and Evaluate the Effectiveness of Best Management Practices: Evaluate the current model of landowner outreach and voluntary stewardship and explore new tools and collaborations that expand conservation opportunities utilizing information from our watershed report cards. Best Management Practices (BMPs) are encouraged to promote soil health, improve water quality, and provide for more resilient watersheds. Efforts need to be made to evaluate the various BMPs to ensure they are creating the results expected such as reducing nutrient loss from farm fields (with a focus on phosphorus) and decreasing sedimentation in watercourses. This is an opportunity to work with colleges and universities, farming groups, and others to develop solid science to evaluate BMP effectiveness.”

“Focus on Programs to Reduce Phosphorous Loading into the Great Lakes: Governments on both sides of the border have been taking action setting targets for the Great Lakes to deal with the problem of excess Phosphorus. Stewardship programs,

while also addressing other watershed needs, should focus on reducing Phosphorous levels entering the Great Lakes.”

Financial Impact:

Staff have finalized a work plan and signed a three-year contribution agreement with ECCC totaling \$220,000 covering 2019-2022 which will support the development of the Sydenham Watershed Phosphorus Management Plan.

(g) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the update dated June 5, 2020 regarding the Sydenham River Watershed Phosphorus Management Plan.

Tree Planting Program – Spring 2020

- This year’s tree planting program was challenging due to late tree delivery from the nurseries and concerns with methods to keep staff safe through physical distancing protocols. Several Conservation Authorities cancelled their program this year because of this.
- Tree demand and landowner participants were not much different than normal years. However as April approached, we had several landowner cancellations and project deferrals to next year due to their concerns that the Conservation Authority may not be able to fulfill its obligations as well as a lack of trust in our ability to perform a satisfactory planting service during COVID. Approximately 10,000 trees we deferred to 2021 planting season.
- 51,000 trees arrived on May 7th and were placed in cold storage until planting could start on May 11th. This was a 2 week delay to the start of a normal planting season.
- Two mechanical planting crews worked for 3 weeks until the first week of June planting approximately 46,000 trees all on private lands.
- Three hand planters planted another 5,000 trees on private lands plus another 5,000 poplar trees for the Twin Creeks leachate site at the landfill north of Watford.
- All staff used separate vehicles for transportation to planting sites. Several staff that had to use their own vehicles, for which they were paid mileage compensation.
- Thirty two landowners purchased and planted 6,100 seedling trees on their own.
- There were 470 large potted stock trees purchased this spring by Brooke-Alvinston and Warwick Township. Another 180 large trees were purchase by 10 individual landowners.
- This spring’s total project value was more than \$220,000 for the cost of trees, planting and long term tending.
- Landowners contributed \$40,500 this year.
- SCRCA secured and provided \$180,000 to landowner through several grants.

(h) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated June 8, 2020 regarding spring 2020 tree planting on private, corporate and public lands.

- Catch basin treatments with a mosquito larvicide will be conducted in all rural and urban areas within the County of Lambton and the City of Sarnia starting in late June and ending in mid-August. SCRCA staff will be working under the direction of Lambton Public Health during the treatment operations again this year.
- Catch basins located within Aamjiwnaang will be treated under a separate contract pending approval for funding from Health Canada.
- Permits to treat surface water are obtained from the MECP under the Authority's Pesticide Operators Licence and Insurance and staff exterminator's licences.
- Pre-treatment larvae sampling has been scheduled for the week of June 15th. If mosquito larvae activity is low, a second sampling may be required the following week.
- Larvae results are sent to Lambton Public Health. Mosquito activity levels will be used to determine treatment start date. Approval from the Lambton Medical Officer of Health is required before treatments commence.
- Catch basins will be treated with methoprene in pellet formulation. Methoprene is a growth regulator which prevents mosquito larva from becoming biting adults. There will be three separate larvicide applications set at 21-day intervals starting around June 25th and finishing around the 20th of August.
- There are approximately 16,500 catch basins slated for multiple applications throughout the summer
- A colour code paint mark will be used for every catch basin treated with larvicide.
- The use of larvicide is limited to an exterminator with a mosquito/ biting fly licence or up to 7-trained technicians working under the supervision of a licence holder.
- SCRCA staff will also conduct efficacy tests as part of the treatment program by collecting mosquito pupa samples throughout the summer. Pupa are monitored for percent adult emergence. Past efficacy tests show an average of 80% effectiveness for controlling mosquito emergence.

(i) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated June 8, 2020 regarding the treatment of catch basins with a larvicide in Lambton County's rural and urban areas.

The regulations activity report to May, 2020 was reviewed.

(j) That the Board of Directors accepts the Regulations Activity Reports on "Development, Interference with Wetlands & Alterations to Shorelines & Watercourses" Regulations (Ontario Regulation 171/06), dated June 6, 2020 and includes the period April 1, 2020 to May 31, 2020, as presented.

The planning activity summary Report to May, 2020 was reviewed.

(k) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority's Monthly Planning Activity Summary Reports, dated June 8, 2020 for April and May 2020.

The revenue and expenditure report to May 31, 2020 was reviewed.

(l) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the revenue and expenditure report to May 31, 2020, as it relates to the budget.

The report on April and May, 2020 disbursements were reviewed.

(m) That the Board of Directors approves the April and May 2020 disbursements as presented in the amount of \$1,740,115.09.

The 2020 general levy receipts to May 31, 2020 were reviewed.

(n) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the status report on the 2020 general levy receipts to May 31, 2020.

The financial investment statements to April 30, 2020 were reviewed.

(o) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the financial investment statements through April 30, 2020.

Virtual Field Trips

In response to school closures SCRCA Education Staff have developed Virtual Field Trips for Elementary and Secondary students in our watershed. SCRCA Education tackled this project aiming to achieve the following goals.

- We hope to be of service to teachers, student and families during this time of online learning.
- We strive to increase our watershed community's connection to Conservation and the environment.
- We aim to maintain, strengthen and grow our relationships with watersheds schools, teachers and students.

We believe we have met and exceeded these goals.

Assisting Teachers and Students with Online Learning:

We have been overwhelmed by the success of these learning tools. While it is difficult to track exact statistics for online usage, we can confirm Virtual Field Trips have been viewed at least 7,500 times to date! Teachers from across the Province have built our local program into their on-line student learning plans! SCRCA Virtual Field trips are being used by teachers from the following School Boards: Lambton-Kent, St. Clair Catholic, Peel Region Catholic and Public boards, Toronto, Avon-Maitland, Niagara, Halton, Sudbury, Simcoe, Thunder Bay, Peterborough and Edmonton, AB! People have also viewed the links from the United States, Columbia, Kenya, Korea, Mauritius, Sweden and New Zealand!

Increasing Connections to Conservation and the Environment:

SCRCA Virtual Field Trips inspire students and families to visit their local wetland, green space, or even their backyards to discover the tremendous diversity of life in these very

important habitats! We have received wonderful feedback from teachers sharing their student's outdoor adventures following our Virtual Field Trip lessons. Creating a spark of environmental enthusiasm will assist students and their parents in making responsible environmental decisions in the future.

Strengthening Communication with Teachers:

The expansion of SCRCA Conservation Education's on-line presence has resulted in improved communication and program promotion now and into the future. As teachers learn of the Virtual Field Trips and subscribe to our mailing list, we have been able to increase the number of teacher contacts in the SCRCA watershed. We are now able to build relationships with these new teachers using the success of the Virtual Field Trips to encourage them to participate in our outdoor programs once field trips resume!

More Teacher Feedback – Virtual Pond Field Trips:

"I just wanted to reach out and thank you for the amazing virtual field trips, they are SO well done! I will be passing it on to all of the teachers and parents I know! Thank you for helping us support students at home and keep them engaged with the environment."

- Jane, Halton District School Board

"I just want to say thank you for taking the time to put these together. I know it is a lot of work. But it is much appreciated by students and teachers! These were a gift when I saw them the other day!"

- Nancy, Simcoe County District School Board

"You guys are geniuses and I hope you get a raise! Is there somewhere I can nominate you for an award?"

- Melissa, Lambton-Kent District School Board

"Thank you very much! I had not heard of the virtual field trip. I just watched the Gr. 1 one and loved it. I can certainly incorporate that into Seesaw. I will let my colleagues know about it!"

- Sara, Lambton-Kent District School Board

"Thank you for your email! This is AMAZING! How exciting is this. I will share with our staff as well."

- Zoe, St. Clair Catholic District School Board

(p) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the education staff report dated June 4, 2020 on the Conservation Education Progress Report.

St. Clair River Area of Concern (AOC) Governance:

Since 2011, the SCRCA has been granted funding to support the St. Clair River Area of Concern (AOC) Governance project, which supports a full-time Remedial Action Plan (RAP) Coordinator and associated costs (e.g., communications, meeting expenses). Funding for the project has been shared between Environment and Climate Change

Canada (ECCC) and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). The Governance project and RAP Coordinator position have been instrumental in advancing the St. Clair River towards removal from the list of Great Lakes AOCs.

An application was submitted to ECCC through the Great Lakes Protection Initiative (GLPI) funding program in March to support the Governance project and RAP Coordinator position for an additional two years (2020-2021 and 2021-2022 fiscal years). Unfortunately, due to limited funds, the SCRCA application was denied. Staff are working with ECCC and MECP representatives to develop a solution that will ensure the continuation of this program in the future.

Meetings and Events

Meetings:

Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR)

- June 8, 2020 – Zoom Conferencing Platform (Virtual Meeting)

Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC)

- June 25, 2020 – Zoom Conferencing Platform (Virtual Meeting)

(q) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report, dated June 3, 2020 on the St. Clair River Area of Concern.

SCRCA Scholarship Program 2020:

Every year, four scholarships are available to graduating high school students who are pursuing post-secondary studies in an environmental field (e.g., biology, ecology, agriculture, etc.). Eligible students must live in or attend a secondary school within the SCRCA boundary.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting closure of secondary schools throughout the watershed, scholarship packages were unable to be delivered directly to local high schools. Promotion of scholarships has primarily been through SCRCA social media outlets and through the Lambton Kent and Thames Valley District School Boards. A media release was issued on April 15th and published in a number of local newspapers.

The applications are scored based on marks; interest and activities as they relate to conservation and the environment; future studies as they relate to conservation and the environment; reference letter(s); and other comments offered by the applicant.

Applications for the 2020 SCRCA scholarships were due on May 31, 2020. In total, 4 applications were received, however, one applicant was deemed ineligible due to living and attending a school outside the jurisdiction of the SCRCA. The applications were reviewed by a committee established by the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation consisting of Norm Giffen, Archie Kerr, Brian McDougall and Donna Blue. The

Foundation Board of Directors approved the recommended scholarship recipients at their meeting on June 4, 2020.

The following awards will be presented in the coming weeks.

A.W. Campbell Memorial Scholarship (\$1000):

- Brady Grubb, Lambton Kent Composite School, Dresden, Ontario

Tony Stranak Conservation Scholarship (\$500):

- Trevor McBrayne, Lambton Kent Composite School, Dresden, Ontario

Mary Jo Arnold Conservation Scholarship (\$500):

- Gracie Goodhill, North Lambton Secondary School, Forest, Ontario

(r) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the 2020 Scholarship Program report dated June 4, 2020.

In late November of 2019, damage occurred to the boat ramp seawall protection. The steel sheet pile on the original groyne at the west side was removed by wave action. In addition to the groyne damage, considerable erosion is occurring on both the east and west side of the ramp protection structures. On the east, the erosion is moving closer to the parking lot and within the protection, erosion has exposed the steel sheet wall side of the ramp.

Due to safety concerns, the ramp has been closed for the 2020 season. Concrete blocks have been placed at the top of the ramp.

Ongoing Maintenance to Maintain Ramp Closure

In early March, two concrete blocks were placed at the entrance to the boat ramp and “closed for 2020” signs were placed at the property entrance and top of the ramp. Since installation contractors have been required twice to re-secure the road block at the ramp.

1. March 27, 2020 – One block was dragged far enough to allow access to the ramp. Contractor returned with equipment to move back in place.
2. May 28, 2020 – Reports were received that the blocks had been moved and boats were launching. Contractor returned and added two additional blocks, placed them tightly together, moved blocks onto ramp slope, and secured the blocks together.

Costs to block ramp use have been:

- Initial block placement - \$860 +hst
- March 28 repositioning - \$255 + hst
- May 28 additional blocks – estimated \$1000 - \$1500

Requests for Engineering Study Quotes

RIGGS Engineering provided an initial estimate on March 31, 2020 that included an inspection of the existing structure, a coastal assessment, a topographical survey, and plans and specifications for repairs. The cost of this work was estimated at \$14,260 plus HST.

A more in-depth study is desired to address additional concerns at Highland Glen. Erosion concerns should be addressed before investing in repairs. Erosion has started to encroach on the parking lot and is flanking the existing structure on both sides. With high water, the rate of erosion has increased. The existing walkways are in need of repair due to damage from high water in 2019. Sediment has accumulated inside the existing structure since the failure of the west groyne.

At the time of this report, one quote has been received for the expanded scope of work. The cost of the study is \$40,500 plus HST. To move forward with a study that exceeds \$25,000, a tender process will be required. This estimate follows this report.

Financial Impact:

The Highland Glen Conservation Area reserve at the end of 2019 totalled \$11,619.25 (unaudited). The cost of the desired study is estimated at \$40,000 based on one quote received. An additional \$20,000 - \$30,000 will be required to complete this study, dependent on the tendered cost.

Highland Glen is designated a “regional” property by the SCRCA Board of Directors. Costs for regional properties are paid by all member municipalities through a non-matching general levy.

With the 2020 budget approved, staff could investigate opportunities to proceed with the study and defer the costs to the 2021 budget.

A recorded vote was requested

Director	For	Against
MacKinnon, Betty Ann	✓	
Nemcek, Frank	✓	
Faas, Joe	✓	
Hall, Aaron	✓	
Broad, Al	✓	
Marriott, Kevin	✓	
McMillan, Dan	✓	
McEwen, Netty	✓	

Gordon, Larry	✓	
Bruziewicz, Andy	✓	
Burrell, Terry	✓	
Stark, Mike		✓
McGill, Mark	✓	
Brown, Pat	✓	
Miller, Steve	✓	
Brennan, John	✓	
Kennes, Frank	✓	
Westgate, Jerry	✓	
Total	17	1

Director’s Comments:

Directors discussed concerns regarding the financial commitments required from Municipalities for such a large project. It was recommended to proceed with the tender process for an engineered study investigating options for repairs and erosion control with quotes and proposed phases to be brought to the next board of directors meeting for review and an informed decision. It was also suggested that having such documentation on-hand may be helpful in securing government funding, should programs become available.

BD-20-54

Broad - McEwen

“That the Board of Director’s acknowledges the report dated June 6, 2020 on the Highland Glen Conservation area and approves proceeding with the tender process for an engineered study investigating options for infrastructure repair and erosion control with costs to be deferred to 2021.”

CARRIED

The Ontario Government is proposing the development of government response statements for the Spiny Softshell turtle. These statements outline the actions the government is taking and supports to protect the Spiny Softshell turtle.

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority is located in southwestern Ontario and includes the Sydenham River watershed and smaller watersheds draining directly into southern Lake Huron, the St. Clair River and northeastern Lake St. Clair. Our position in the Carolinian Life Zone means we have a high percentage of Ontario’s species at risk. This area also has a highly modified landscape with limited protected area, so it is

essential to maintain and protect existing natural heritage features and the species at risk that inhabit them. All species including species at risk, specifically, the Spiny Softshell, depend on functioning, resilient ecosystems to survive. The primary cause in most species' decline in the province is due to habitat loss and degradation. The ecosystems that provide habitat to all of our species provide numerous irreplaceable benefits such as air and water purification, soil stabilization, flood prevention and climate change mitigation.

SCRCA fully endorses the Ontario government's Recovery Goal for the Spiny Softshell of supporting the long-term viability of existing local populations and, where biologically and technically feasible, supporting the increase in the distribution and abundance of the species by managing and restoring the species' habitat, improving habitat connectivity between local populations, reducing threats, and improving recruitment.

As a Conservation Authority located in the heart of known Spiny Softshell habitat in Southwestern Ontario (the Sydenham River Watershed), SCRCA is well-suited to assist the Ontario Government in achieving the Recovery Actions for the Spiny Softshell. Should funding become available, SCRCA is more than willing to assist in the following aspects of Spiny Softshell recovery in Ontario:

Management Actions

1. (High) SCRCA is keen to work collaboratively with landowners, land managers, stakeholders, partners, and Indigenous communities and organizations, to develop and implement techniques and best management practices (BMP) to reduce threats to the species and their habitat. Working collaboratively, SCRCA would promote and implement where possible:

- a. alternatives to traditional development, such as using natural forms of shoreline stabilization rather than hardening shorelines with "rip-rap" or stone walls, where appropriate and feasible;
- b. mitigation techniques to address new road construction and road mortality, including constructing turtle eco-passages (e.g., fencing and tunnels), identifying and addressing existing road mortality hotspots, and using alternatives to traditional roadway construction techniques in sensitive habitats where possible (e.g., bridges over wetlands), where appropriate and feasible;
- c. stewardship activities to reduce disturbance to the species and their habitat (e.g., targeted signage to address local threats);
- d. encouraging and implementing techniques to reduce fishing by-catch;
- e. controlling invasive species in areas where they pose a direct threat to Spiny Softshell; and,
- f. working with local municipalities, conservation authorities and other relevant agencies to implement water management plans that minimize impacts to the species and its habitat, particularly with respect to flooding of nesting habitat during the nesting and incubation period and water drawdowns during the hibernation period.

2. SCRCA is keen to support and work with local landowners, land managers, stakeholders, organizations, government agencies, and Indigenous communities and organizations to develop and implement coordinated habitat management plans to

increase habitat suitability and connectivity, and create, enhance and restore habitat at priority sites.

- SCRCA has strong working relationships with Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and Salthaven Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Centre that have boosted the local head-starting program for Spiny Softshell in Southwestern Ontario.

3. SCRCA is keen to implement, evaluate, adapt and improve techniques to reduce nest predation and improve recruitment, including methods such as nest caging and head-starting in areas where these activities are deemed necessary and appropriate (i.e., recruitment is believed to be insufficient to maintain viable populations).

- SCRCA has over 3 years of experience implementing nest caging and head-starting methods to reduce nest predation and improve recruitment in the Sydenham River Watershed.
- In 2018 alone, SCRCA released 282 Spiny Softshell hatchlings to their respective nest locations.

4. SCRCA is keen to work with local landowners, municipalities and community partners to strategically secure Spiny Softshell habitat and encourage long-term protection through existing land securement and stewardship programs and/or land securement agencies, including land that would support improved habitat connectivity.

- SCRCA has worked with local landowners and stewardship groups in our watershed for over 20 years, implementing over 615 stewardship projects that benefit many SAR species, including Spiny Softshell. Many of these stewardship projects have been supported by the Ontario Species at Risk Stewardship Program (2008-2018).

5. SCRCA is also keen to support and work collaboratively with relevant government, law enforcement agencies and other partners to develop and implement coordinated strategies to address the threat of illegal collection.

Research and Monitoring

6. (High) Where necessary and/or possible, SCRCA is keen to work collaboratively with local landowners, land managers, industry stakeholders, organizations, government agencies, partners and Indigenous communities and organizations to develop and implement a standardized survey and monitoring programs that include:

- a. monitoring distribution and abundance of the species at representative sites across its range in Ontario to identify and track changes in population abundance over time;
- b. assessing species' presence at sites lacking recent observations (including historical sites and extirpated sites where suitable habitat remains) and refining knowledge of the local and regional distribution of Spiny Softshell in Ontario;
- c. monitoring emerging and existing threats to the species; and, encouraging participation in citizen science data collection programs (e.g., iNaturalist).

7. (High) SCRCA is keen to support research to evaluate the effectiveness of threat mitigation techniques, recovery approaches and best management practices, including:

- a. techniques to mitigate impacts of activities, such as shoreline
- b. development and dam construction and operation, on nesting sites;
- c. approaches for habitat creation, restoration and improvement;
- d. techniques for salvage and translocation; and,
- e. techniques for improving recruitment (e.g., nest protection and incubation, head-starting, predator exclusion).

8. Investigate and monitor the severity and potential impacts of threats to local populations such as invasive species, human-subsidized predators, fishing by-catch, illegal collection, pollution and climate change.

9. SCRCA supports future research on species' biology, ecology, habitat use and genetics where knowledge gaps persist, such as:

- a. minimum habitat and population requirements to ensure local population viability (e.g., suitable habitat size, number of mature individuals);
- b. habitat needs and use for various life stages (e.g., nesting, feeding, hibernating);
- c. population genetics and demographics across the species' range; and,
- d. effects of changes in precipitation, water levels, and extreme weather on local habitat availability and individual survival (e.g., flooding of nests along shorelines).

10. As appropriate, SCRCA encourages the recording, sharing and transfer of Traditional Ecological Knowledge on Spiny Softshell, where it has been shared by communities, to increase knowledge of the species and support future recovery efforts.

Awareness and Stewardship

11. SCRCA is keen to promote public awareness of Spiny Softshell, including its status and protection under the ESA, and engage the public in Spiny Softshell stewardship. This may include:

- a. developing interactive social media and social marketing campaigns to promote Spiny Softshell stewardship and reduce threats such as accidental mortality and illegal collection. Coordinate with other species at risk turtle initiatives where appropriate;
- b. working collaboratively with land owners, land managers, municipalities, the public, and other stakeholders to increase their awareness of Spiny Softshell and how to reduce impacts to the species; and,
- c. educating the public on what to do if they encounter an injured turtle or a nest in a high-risk area.

SCRCA supports the recovery of the Spiny Softshell in the Sydenham River Watershed and beyond. We are keen to assist where we are able and implement as many of the recovery actions as feasible.

Strategic Objectives(s):

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority has as its vision, watersheds where human needs are met in balance with the needs of the natural environment. According to *A Way Forward – Strategic Plan*, one of SCRCA’s four goals is to: “Goal 2 – Protect, manage, and restore our natural systems including woodlands, wetlands, waterways, and lakes.”

Supporting the Ontario Government Response Statements concerning the Spiny Softshell turtle will help protect the Sydenham River Watershed.

Financial Impact:

The Species at Risk Stewardship Fund was created under the *Endangered Species Act* to encourage people to get involved in protecting and recovering species at risk through stewardship activities.

Over the five year period from 2013-2017 the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund provided over \$315,000 to SCRCA to implement a variety of stewardship projects such as tree planting, wetland creation, and turtle nesting habitat enhancement. The Fund has also support a variety of outdoor education learning opportunities.

Additional support to the Authority is provided through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk. This Fund supports biological monitoring of species at risk and the implementation of stewardship projects in the Sydenham River Watershed in an effort to contribute directly to the recovery objectives and population goals of species at risk listed on Schedule 1 of the Species at Risk Act (SARA). We are entering the 2nd year of a four-year grant, totalling \$1.1 million.

BD-20-55**MacKinnon – McGill**

“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated June 1, 2020 on the Ontario Government Response Statement for the Spiny Softshell and further endorse the comments prepared by staff.”

CARRIED

The Ontario Government is proposing the development of government response statements for the Blanding’s Turtle, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Northern Bobwhite, Spotted Turtle, Little Brown Myotis, Northern Myotis, Tri-colored Bat, and the White Wood Aster. These statements outline the actions the government is taking and supports to protect these species.

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority is located in southwestern Ontario and includes the Sydenham River watershed and smaller watersheds draining directly into southern Lake Huron, the St. Clair River and northeastern Lake St. Clair. Our position in the Carolinian Life Zone means we have a high percentage of Ontario’s species at risk. This area also has a highly modified landscape with limited protected area, so it is essential to maintain and protect existing natural heritage features and the species at risk

that inhabit them. All species, including species at risk depend on functioning, resilient ecosystems to survive. The primary cause in most species' decline in the province is due to habitat loss and degradation. The ecosystems that provide habitat to all of our species provide numerous irreplaceable benefits such as air and water purification, soil stabilization, flood prevention and climate change mitigation. The Sydenham River watershed is home to the Blanding's Turtle, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Northern Bobwhite, Spotted Turtle, Little Brown Myotis, Northern Myotis, and the Tri-colored Bat.

SCRCA fully endorses the Ontario government's Recovery Goals for the species found in our watershed and those that are not (White Wood Aster). SCRCA supports the long-term viability of existing local populations and, where biologically and technically feasible, supporting the increase in the distribution and abundance of the species by managing and restoring the species' habitat, improving habitat connectivity between local populations, reducing threats, and improving recruitment. Additionally, we support the filling knowledge gaps related to each of the listed species concerning their biology, habitat requirements, and the presence and severity of threats.

As a Conservation Authority located in Southwestern Ontario within the Sydenham River Watershed, SCRCA is well suited to assist the Ontario Government in achieving the Recovery Actions for the Blanding's Turtle, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Northern Bobwhite, Spotted Turtle, Little Brown Myotis, Northern Myotis, and the Tri-colored Bat. The Sydenham River Watershed is one of Canada's most biodiverse regions, with many local aquatic and terrestrial SAR. Implementing actions that benefit the listed SAR will further enhance the ecosystem for other local SAR and/or not-at-risk species.

Should funding become available, SCRCA is more than willing to assist in the following aspects of Blanding's Turtle, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Northern Bobwhite, Spotted Turtle, Little Brown Myotis, Northern Myotis, and the Tri-colored Bat recovery in Ontario.

Management Actions

1. (High) SCRCA is keen to work collaboratively with landowners, land managers, stakeholders, partners, and Indigenous communities and organizations, to develop and implement techniques and best management practices (BMP) to reduce threats to the species and their habitat. Working collaboratively, SCRCA would promote and implement where possible:
 - a. alternatives to traditional development, where appropriate and feasible;
 - b. mitigation techniques to address new road construction and road mortality, identifying and addressing existing road mortality hotspots, and using alternatives to traditional roadway construction techniques in sensitive habitats where possible (e.g., bridges over wetlands), where appropriate and feasible;
 - c. stewardship activities to reduce disturbance to the species and their habitat (e.g., targeted signage to address local threats);
 - d. encouraging and implementing techniques to reduce fishing by-catch;
 - e. controlling invasive species in areas where they pose a direct threat to each species;

- f. maintaining or enhancing habitat for Eastern Whip-poor-will and other aerial insectivores and their insect prey at both local and landscape levels;
 - g. promoting the implementation of policies and programs that promote beneficial insects and reduce light pollution and the pollutants that contribute to climate change; and,
 - h. working with local municipalities, conservation authorities and other relevant agencies to implement water management plans that minimize impacts to the species and its habitat.
2. SCRCA is keen to support and work with local landowners, land managers, stakeholders, organizations, government agencies, and Indigenous communities and organizations to develop and implement coordinated habitat management plans to increase habitat suitability and connectivity, and create, enhance and restore habitat at priority sites.
 - a. SCRCA has strong working relationships with Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and Salthaven Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Centre that have boosted the local head-starting program for local at risk turtle species in Southwestern Ontario.
3. SCRCA is keen to implement, evaluate, adapt and improve techniques to reduce Blanding's turtle, Spotted Turtle, and other SAR turtle nest predation and improve recruitment, including methods such as nest caging and head-starting in areas where these activities are deemed necessary and appropriate (i.e., recruitment is believed to be insufficient to maintain viable populations).
4. (High) SCRCA is keen to work collectively with industry (e.g., mining, aggregates, forestry, problem/nuisance wildlife removal, agriculture, wind power) develop, implement, evaluate and promote best management practices to minimize the impacts of industry activities and operations on Little Brown Myotis, Northern Myotis and Tri-colored Bat and their habitat.
5. (High) SCRCA is keen to work collaboratively with Walpole Island First Nation, landowners, land managers, and researchers to develop, implement and evaluate management plans and best management practices to maintain or improve the quality of Northern Bobwhite habitat and viability of populations at existing sites.
6. SCRCA is keen to work with local landowners, municipalities and community partners to strategically secure SAR habitat and encourage long-term protection through existing land securement and stewardship programs and/or land securement agencies, including land that would support improved habitat connectivity.
 - SCRCA has worked with local landowners and stewardship groups in our watershed for over 20 years, implementing over 615 stewardship projects that benefit many SAR species. Ontario Species at Risk Stewardship Program (2008-2018) funded many of these stewardship projects.
7. SCRCA is also keen to support and work collaboratively with relevant government, law enforcement agencies and other partners to develop and implement coordinated strategies to address the threat of illegal collection.

Research and Monitoring

8. (High) Where necessary and/or possible, SCRCA is keen to work collaboratively with local landowners, land managers, industry stakeholders, organizations, government agencies, partners and Indigenous communities and organizations to develop and implement a standardized survey and monitoring programs for Blanding's Turtle, Spotted Turtle, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Little Brown Myotis, Northern Myotis, and Tri-colored Bat that include:
 - a. monitoring distribution and abundance of the species at representative sites across its range in Ontario to identify and track changes in population abundance over time;
 - b. assessing species' presence at sites lacking recent observations (including historical sites and extirpated sites where suitable habitat remains) and refining knowledge of the local and regional distribution of these listed species at risk in Ontario; and,
 - c. monitoring emerging and existing threats to the species; and, encouraging participation in citizen science data collection programs (e.g., iNaturalist).
9. (High) SCRCA is keen to support research to evaluate the effectiveness of threat mitigation techniques, recovery approaches and best management practices, including:
 - a. techniques to mitigate impacts of activities;
 - b. approaches for habitat creation, restoration and improvement;
 - c. techniques for salvage and translocation; and,
 - d. techniques for improving recruitment (e.g., nest protection and incubation, head-starting, predator exclusion).
10. SCRCA will support investigations into and will continue to monitor the severity and potential impacts of threats to local populations such as invasive species, human-subsidized predators, fishing by-catch, illegal collection, pollution and climate change.
11. SCRCA supports future research on species' biology, ecology, habitat use and genetics where knowledge gaps persist, such as:
 - a. minimum habitat and population requirements to ensure local population viability (e.g., suitable habitat size, number of mature individuals);
 - b. habitat needs and use for various life stages (e.g., nesting, feeding, hibernating);
 - c. population genetics and demographics across the species' range;
 - d. investigate the need for and feasibility of augmentation or reintroduction of Northern Bobwhite populations,
 - e. further refine understanding of the Eastern Whip-poor-will's ecology and habitat characteristics; and,
 - f. effects of changes in precipitation, water levels, and extreme weather on local habitat availability and individual survival (e.g., flooding of nests along shorelines).
12. As appropriate, SCRCA encourages the recording, sharing and transfer of Traditional Ecological Knowledge on these species at risk, where it has been shared by communities, to increase knowledge of the species and support future recovery efforts.

Awareness and Stewardship

13. SCRCA is keen to promote public awareness of local species at risk, including their status and protection under the ESA, and engage the public in stewardship education and implementation. This may include:

- a. developing interactive social media and social marketing campaigns to promote species at risk stewardship and reduce threats;
- b. coordinate with other species at risk initiatives, where appropriate;
- c. working collaboratively with land owners, land managers, municipalities, the public, and other stakeholders to increase their awareness of local species at risk and how to reduce impacts to the species; and,
- d. educating the public on what to do if they encounter an injured individual.

SCRCA supports the recovery of the Blanding's Turtle, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Northern Bobwhite, Spotted Turtle, Little Brown Myotis, Northern Myotis, Tri-colored Bat, and White Wood Aster in the Sydenham River Watershed and beyond. We are keen to assist where we are able and implement as many of the recovery actions as feasible.

Strategic Objectives(s):

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority has as its vision, watersheds where human needs are met in balance with the needs of the natural environment. According to *A Way Forward – Strategic Plan*, one of SCRCA's four goals is to: "Goal 2 – Protect, manage, and restore our natural systems including woodlands, wetlands, waterways, and lakes."

Supporting the Ontario Government Response Statements concerning these eight species at risk will help protect the Sydenham River Watershed.

Financial Impact:

The Species at Risk Stewardship Fund was created under the *Endangered Species Act* to encourage people to get involved in protecting and recovering species at risk through stewardship activities.

Over the five year period from 2013-2017 the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund provided over \$315,000 to SCRCA to implement a variety of stewardship projects such as tree planting, wetland creation, and turtle nesting habitat enhancement. The Fund has also support a variety of outdoor education learning opportunities.

Additional support to the Authority is provided through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk. This Fund supports biological monitoring of species at risk and the implementation of stewardship projects in the Sydenham River Watershed in an effort to contribute directly to the recovery objectives and population goals of species at risk listed on Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). We are entering the 2nd year of a four-year grant, totalling \$1.1 million.

BD-20-56

McGill – Burrell

“That the Board of Directors acknowledge the report dated June 1, 2020 on the Ontario Government Response Statements for the Blanding’s Turtle, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Northern Bobwhite, Spotted Turtle, Little Brown Myotis, Northern Myotis, Tri-colored Bat, and the White Wood Aster and further endorse the comments prepared by staff.”

CARRIED

The Conservation Authorities Act falls under the umbrella of the Provincial Offences Act.

Current Procedure

When a violation of the Conservation Authorities Act is brought to the attention of staff, we attempt to work with the landowner to remediate the violating works. If staff are unable, or the proponent is unwilling, staff may proceed to lay charges under the Provincial Offences Act if warranted and enough evidence is collected to defend the charge.

If the landowner proceeds to correct the violation, before the case appears in court, SCRCA staff will have the charges withdrawn in order to limit legal fees. Often, SCRCA staff will request an adjournment if we reasonably believe the landowner will correct and or restore the area and/or apply with a complete application for a Board Hearing.

The Authority does not have the ability to obtain costs under Provincial Offences legislation. Any and all legal costs incurred during court proceedings are the responsibility of each party, regardless of the outcome. As such, it has been the practice of the Authority to only proceed to court in those situations where the landowner is not willing to work with the Authority to correct the violation.

Legislation:

In 2006, the Conservation Authorities Act was amended as part of the Red Tape Reduction Initiative and regulations implemented pursuant to Section 28 of the Act. These regulations are entitled “Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses” With the approval of O.R. 171/06, Conservation Authorities are responsible for issuing development approvals in regulated areas, including shoreline areas and wetlands. If works proceed without the written permission of the Authority, and the landowner is unwilling to work with SCRCA staff toward a resolution, SCRCA staff have 2 years from the time the violation came to the attention of the Authority to proceed to Provincial Offences Court to remedy the violation. Please note: at this time a suspension order has been made under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act that suspends all “limitation periods” for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency (O. Reg. 73/20) until these proceedings are being held again.

Conservation Authorities Act (relevant subsections under section 28):

Offence: contravening regulation

(16) Every person who contravenes a regulation made under subsection (1) or the terms and conditions of a permission of an authority in a regulation made under clause (1) (b) or (c) is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a fine of not more than \$10,000 or to a term of imprisonment of not more than three months. 1998, c. 18, Sched. I, s. 12; 2010, c. 16, Sched. 10, s. 1 (2).

Limitation for proceeding

(16.1) A proceeding with respect to an offence under subsection (16) shall not be commenced more than two years from the earliest of the day on which evidence of the offence is discovered or first comes to the attention of officers appointed under clause (1) (d) or persons appointed under clause (1) (e). 2010, c. 16, Sched. 10, s. 1 (3).

Orders

(17) In addition to any other remedy or penalty provided by law, the court, upon making a conviction under subsection (16), may order the person convicted to,

- (a) remove, at that person's expense, any development within such reasonable time as the court orders; and
- (b) rehabilitate any watercourse or wetland in the manner and within the time the court orders. 1998, c. 18, Sched. I, s. 12

Non-compliance with order

(18) If a person does not comply with an order made under subsection (17), the authority having jurisdiction may, in the case of a development, have it removed and, in the case of a watercourse or wetland, have it rehabilitated. 1998, c. 18, Sched. I, s. 12.

Liability for certain costs

(19) The person convicted is liable for the cost of a removal or rehabilitation under subsection (18) and the amount is recoverable by the authority by action in a court of competent jurisdiction. 1998, c. 18, Sched. I, s. 12.

Definitions

(25) In this section, "development" means,

- (a) the construction, reconstruction, erection or placing of a building or structure of any kind,
- (b) any change to a building or structure that would have the effect of altering the use or potential use of the building or structure, increasing the size of the building or structure or increasing the number of dwelling units in the building or structure,
- (c) site grading, or
- (d) the temporary or permanent placing, dumping or removal of any material, originating on the site or elsewhere; ("aménagement")

"wetland" means land that,

- (a) is seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water or has a water table close to

or at its surface,

(b) directly contributes to the hydrological function of a watershed through connection with a surface watercourse,

(c) has hydric soils, the formation of which has been caused by the presence of abundant water, and

(d) has vegetation dominated by hydrophytic plants or water tolerant plants, the dominance of which has been favoured by the presence of abundant water, but does not include periodically soaked or wet land that is used for agricultural purposes and no longer exhibits a wetland characteristic referred to in clause (c) or (d). (“terre marécageuse”) 1998, c. 18, Sched. I, s. 12.

O.R. 171/06 – Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to

Shoreline and Watercourses (relevant sections):

Development prohibited

2. (1) Subject to section 3, no person shall undertake development or permit another person to undertake development in or on the areas within the jurisdiction of the Authority that are,

(a) adjacent or close to the shoreline of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River System or to inland lakes that may be affected by flooding, erosion or dynamic beaches, including the area from the furthest offshore extent of the Authority’s boundary to the furthest landward extent of the aggregate of the distance in subclause (i) or (ii), as applicable, and the distances referred to in the subclauses (iii), (iv) and (v),

(i) for Lake Huron, the 100 year flood level, plus the appropriate allowance for wave uprush found in the most recent document entitled “Lake Huron Shoreline Management Plan” available at the head office of the Authority,

(ii) for Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair River, the 100 year flood level plus the appropriate allowance for wave uprush found in the most recent document entitled “Great Lakes System Flood Levels and Water Related Hazards” available at the head office of the Authority,

(b) river or stream valleys that have depressional features associated with a river or stream, whether or not they contain a watercourse, the limits of which are determined in accordance with the following rules:

(i) where the river or stream valley is apparent and has unstable slopes, the valley extends from the predicted long term stable slope projected from the existing stable slope or, if the toe of the slope is unstable, from the predicted location of the toe of the slope as a result of stream erosion over a projected 100 year period, plus 15 metres, to a similar point on the opposite side,

(d) wetlands;

Alterations prohibited

5. Subject to section 6, no person shall straighten, change, divert or interfere in any way with the existing channel of a river, creek, stream or watercourse or change or interfere in

any way with a wetland. O. Reg. 171/06, s. 5.

Permission to develop

3. (1) The Authority may grant permission for development in or on the areas described in subsection 2 (1) if, in its opinion, the control of flooding, erosion, dynamic beaches, pollution or the conservation of land will not be affected by the development. O. Reg. 171/06, s. 3 (1).”

To summarize the above, the Authority may grant permission for a development to occur within a Regulated Area, if in the opinion of the Authority, the application meets SCRCA Policies and Regulations. If the Applicant refuses to apply for permission and or provide an application to be considered under a Board Hearing, SCRCA staff have the option with Board Approval to proceed to Provincial Offences Court to seek remediation.

File Summary:

FV-2018-021 Tim Payne, SCRCA staff and County Woodlands Conservation By-law Officer contacted Regulations staff regarding tree removal in a Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) on July 18, 2018. Various conversations regarding the works continued until it was agreed that a site visit should occur to determine if the works would be considered an alteration to the hydrology of a wetland. A site visit on December 19, 2018 confirmed that works had commenced that would not be permitted, but stated that if no further works continued and the area of the removal be left to regenerate on this and other areas of removal that staff would not proceed any further with this file. It was also discussed that works may commence in the buffer lands, but a follow up visit during spring conditions would be appropriate to delineate the wetland. It was requested that we do a site visit the following spring to confirm the areas had been allowed to regenerate and to delineate the wetland within the 120 m. buffer lands. Subsequent requests for a site visit were ignored.

R#2020-0209 The SCRCA General mailbox received an anonymous call regarding concrete being dumped into the St. Clair River from a construction site near Seager Park. SCRCA Staff review including Google Earth determined this fill was ongoing since 2015 and represented significant fill and land reclamation by the continual dumping of debris directly into and adjacent to St. Clair river.

A notice of violation was sent by email regarding the alteration to the St. Clair river on May 5, 2020. On the same day, SCRCA staff received a phone call from Mr. MacPherson stating that the shoreline works continued because of an erosion issue that SCRCA created and he is fixing at his own expense. He made it clear that he intends to farm the cleared areas within the PSW and adjacent lands when asked about that file. He followed up on that call with an email on May 8, 2020 stating that he would pay for a permit if it is a reasonable cost. SCRCA staff responded that SCRCA policies require engineering for shoreline erosion control structures and a SCRCA Permit could not be issued for either file after the fact unless the fill is removed and an engineered solution is

provided for SCRCA review for File R#2020-0209. For File FV 2018-021, no alteration to a PSW that affects the hydrology of the wetland can be permitted under Ontario Regulation 171/06 Section 5 pursuant to the Conservation Authorities Act.

Recommendation:

Both files do not meet SCRCA Regulations and Policy. The landowner refuses to restore or remediate. SCRCA staff can not issue a Permit at his request. SCRCA staff is requesting to move forward and consult with legal representation, review evidence and obtain recommendations before returning to the Board in September and plotting a course forward that could conclude with charges under the Provincial Offences Act. If during this process, the landowner chooses to work with the Authority, SCRCA staff can withdraw the charges and work towards a resolution.

BD-20-57

MacKinnon – Kennes

“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated June 8, 2020 on the Development proceeded in a Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) involving the interference with 390, 669.5 square meters of PSW and PSW adjacent land (buffer) in the form of clearing, excavating and site grading of lands; and Fill, excavation and site grading at the shoreline of St. Clair River and further recommends that staff consult with legal representation prior to reviewing a recommendation at the next Board Meeting.”

CARRIED

Due to COVID-19, emergency Provincial directions were given for employees to work at home where possible. On March 18, 2020, we deployed employees to work from home on a temporary basis. To address these situations in the future, we have created an Emergency Work at Home Policy to be added to our Administrative Policy Manual.

The Emergency Work at Home Policy was reviewed.

BD-20-58

Nemcek – Brown

“The Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated June 5, 2020 on the Emergency Work at Home Policy and further approves the addition of this policy to the SCRCA Administrative Policy Manual.”

CARRIED

The current Pandemic COVID-19 has affected many businesses and communities. The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) was able to move quickly to protect employees and reduce the risk of spread. Several measures we adopted immediately, thus reducing risk and potential liability included:

- closing to the public

- providing secured access and equipment for employees to be deployed to work from home

SCRCA was able to keep the parks and trails open through the early stages of the Pandemic with limited maintenance available on the trails, which provide communities with much needed outdoor space. Innovation came from our situation, in that our Education department was able to find ways to continue to engage schools and students that were not able to visit as groups.

As the pandemic continues to unfold with unknown outcomes and not knowing when the potential second wave will hit, we continue to monitor cost and revenues. The following steps have been taken to mitigate expenses:

- 1) Delayed hiring several seasonal staff for the campgrounds as they are not operating at capacity, and will not until further Provincial Direction is received, (approximately 25 staff)
- 2) Delayed filling of 2 key positions in Planning
- 3) Delayed filling of 1 RAP Coordinator position

Most of the savings from the salary gap dollars will be offset with losses in revenue and increased costs associated with health and safety supplies required to maintain a safe environment for employees who are currently rotating working in-office. In preparation of increasing employee presence in the office, considerations for increased disinfection and social distancing in small environments (shields, vehicle costs, supplies) may result in additional costs.

Financial Impact:

Levy, Fee & S39 Funded Departments, to May 31, 2020

Expense Reductions

Planning	Salary Gapping	\$35,000
	10% CRA relief	\$3,500
Administration	10% CRA relief	\$6,800
Water	10% CRA relief	\$3,000

Reductions in Revenue

Planning Fees compared to May 2019	\$24,400
Admin – Interest/Investment Income	\$13,800
Across Levy Departments Increase in Health and Safety directly related to COVID	\$5,000

Net savings to May 2020 \$5,100

Also as a result of travel restrictions and closures of other businesses and industries cost have been reduced in these areas to date:

Travel Expenses	\$1,200
Board Member Travel	\$500

Training Expenses* \$6,400
(*including travel specific to training, contains mandatory training which may need completion)

As SCRCA begins summer field work, the cost of mileage will increase due to the need for social distancing.

The % of the Municipal General Levy of overall 2020 Budget is 12%.

Directors Comments:

It is requested that staff continue to record accounting the effects of COVID-19 as it relates to the 2020 budget and present in a monthly requisition.

Directors enquired whether the CRA tax form T2200 was issued to staff working from home in order to claim expenses incurred in setting up a home office. Staff confirmed that T2200 forms have not been issued as all IT equipment, office supplies and printing continue to be provided by the Administration office.

BD-20-59

Miller – Kennes

“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated June 5, 2020 regarding the effects of COVID-19 to May 31, 2020 on the 2020 Budget.”

CARRIED

Under New Business

Concerns were brought forth on behalf of Director Brad Loosley (regrets) regarding comments made by the Town of Petrolia’s Drainage Superintendent at a recent Council meeting. Drainage professionals report that conflicts with the drainage act and drain enclosure policy are impeding business moving forward. Staff will be preparing a response, conducting consultation on the enclosure policy and mapping out a plan, all of which will be brought to the next Board of Directors meeting.

Concerns were brought forth regarding an agricultural rental property exhibiting poor farming practices. Questions were brought to staff regarding the upcoming land rental tender process and whether such issues can be addressed and therefore avoided in future agreements. The Manager of Forestry, Tim Payne responded informing directors that land rental agreements have been recently revamped. A copy of the updated lease will be sent for review to ensure that such concerns are addressed.

Director Frank Kennes enquired where the responsibility rests for the removal of watercourse obstructions. Staff advised that the local Municipal Public Works should be contacted.

Director Pat Brown made a request for an added clause to the Flood Warning and Flood Contingency Plan that states affected landowners will be notified when the McKeough

dam is to be closed. Staff confirmed that this feedback has been considered and is being incorporated within the Contingency Plan. A list of contacts for affected landowners is maintained by the Conservation Authority and important updates will be delivered via e-mail. Updates to this list can be made upon request to the Conservation Authority or through St. Clair Township.

BD-20-60

Burrell – Brown

“That the meeting be adjourned.”

CARRIED



Joe Faas
Chair



Brian McDougall
General Manager