



## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Date: February 24, 2022

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Remote

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**Directors Present:** Al Broad, Pat Brown, John Brennan, Vice-Chair; Terry Burrell, Bill Dennis, Joe Faas, Aaron Hall, Frank Kennes, Brad Loosley, Betty Ann MacKinnon, Kevin Marriott, Mark McGill, Steve Miller, Frank Nemcek, Lorie Scott, Chair; Mike Stark, Jerry Westgate

**Regrets:** Larry Gordon, Dan McMillan, Tim Wilkins

**Staff Present:** Donna Blue, Manager of Communications; Melissa Deisley, Director of Planning and Regulations; Chris Durand, Manager of IT/GIS; Sarah Hodgkiss, Manager of Planning and Natural Heritage; Ashley Fletcher, Administrative Assistant/ Board Coordinator; Tim Payne, Manager of Forestry; Ken Phillips, General Manager; Tracy Prince, Director of Finance; Girish Sankar, Director of Water Resources; Greg Wilcox, Manager of Lands

**Guests Present:** Diane Brewer, Jordan Keuken, MNP Chartered Professional Accountants LLP; Shaun Bisson and Vince Gagner, Bluewater Association for Safety, the Environment & Sustainability (BASES); David Livingstone

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Lorie Scott, who on behalf of the directors and staff of the Conservation Authority, welcomed everyone to the annual meeting and went on to present some of the challenges faced by the Conservation Authority this past year, as well highlighted its many accomplishments.

### **2021 Highlights:**

- Conservation Areas continued to experience increased traffic, and camping was in high demand.
- The interest in tree planting was at an all-time high with 79,000 seedling trees planted throughout the watershed this past spring.
- Staff secured almost \$300,000 in grant funding to support 42 stewardship projects on local landowner's properties.
- The Biology department built on the success of their 2020 Captive Hatch and Release Program by releasing over 2,000 turtle hatchlings back into the wild – including over 1,100 Eastern Softshell turtles – an endangered species facing imminent extinction.
- Shoreline protection projects continued to move forward along our local shorelines to protect critical municipal infrastructure and properties from flooding and erosion.
- As COVID-19 restrictions lifted, staff were able to hold several in-person events – a welcomed opportunity to reconnect and reengage with our local communities.
- The undertaking of a service delivery review of the Planning and Regulations

department, which provided recommendations to help support staff in meeting the increased needs of our watershed communities.

2021 marked our Authority's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Although celebrations were hampered by the pandemic, the Authority's history was celebrated with a small event on National Tree Day, commemorating two significant milestones; the planting of over 4 million trees and the creation of 100 hectares of wetland in the St. Clair Region. The support of local communities and partners during this challenging time was recognized. A thank you was also given to the Board of Directors, the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation and staff for their hard work over the past year and the perseverance and resilience shown in the face of ever-changing restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The business portion of the meeting was then commenced.

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-22-01**

**Brown – Hall**

**“That the agenda for the Annual General Meeting be adopted.”**

**CARRIED**

The minutes of the Board of Directors meeting, held December 9, 2021, were reviewed.

**BD-22-02**

**Kennes – Aaron**

**“That the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held December 9, 2021, be approved as distributed.”**

**CARRIED**

The minutes of the Executive Committee meeting, held February 10, 2022, were reviewed.

**BD-22-03**

**Miller – MacKinnon**

**“That the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held February 10, 2022, be approved as distributed.”**

**CARRIED**

The minutes of the Conservation Ontario Council meeting, held December 13, 2021, were reviewed

**BD-22-04**

**Burrell – Marriott**

**“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the minutes of the December 13, 2021 Conservation Ontario Council meeting.”**

**CARRIED**

The 2021 audited financial statements were reviewed.

**BD-22-05**

**Burrell – Kennes**

**“That the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority accepts the recommendation of the Executive Committee and report from the Authority’s auditors, MNP Chartered Professional Accountants LLP, and further approves the 2021 Audited Financial Statements.”**

**CARRIED**

Each Year the Conservation Authority presents Conservation Awards to deserving individuals and groups who have contributed to the environmental health of our region. This year, we have two deserving award recipients, the Bluewater Association for Safety, Environment and Sustainability and David Livingstone

**Bluewater Association for Safety, Environment and Sustainability (BASES)**

- BASES was launched in 2021 to provide a home for the interactive exchange of information in Sarnia-Lambton related to the protection of workers, the public, and the environment.
- It bridges three local organizations – Sarnia-Lambton Community Awareness and Emergency Response (CAER), the Sarnia-Lambton Environmental Association (SLEA), and the Sarnia-Lambton Industrial Educational Cooperative (IEC).
- Community feedback was an important component in the organization’s development, and as a result, the BASES website provides information on:
  - Industrial initiatives implemented by member companies that identify, assess, and control risks posed to the local environment;
  - Real-time notifications through the Community Awareness Emergency Response network;
  - Results from the air and water quality monitoring implemented by SLEA, and;
  - Key lessons learned from past emergency incidents that have occurred in the region.
- The staff at BASES contribute to many important community initiatives. From an environmental perspective, representatives from BASES are actively involved in local environmental organizations and committees including the Friends of the St. Clair River community group, the Thames-Sydenham and Region Drinking Water

Source Protection Committee, and committees associated with the St. Clair River Area of Concern program.

- The launch of BASES has resulted in greater communication, education, and transparency within the Sarnia-Lambton community.

On behalf of the BASES Board of Directors, committees, sub-committees and project teams, General Manager Vince Gagner expressed appreciation for the Conservation Award nomination and wished to recognize the Aamjiwnaang First Nation for their example and groundwork of their public notification system and collaboration in building the initial BASIS model. BASES looks forward to working with SCRCA General Manager, Ken Phillips and the team of staff.

### **David Livingstone**

- Mr. Livingstone is a local landowner who has worked with the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority to naturalize his 100-acre farm, located just outside of Komoka.
- Since 2014, David has planted over 27,500 trees on 35 acres of his property, which have complemented the existing 45 acres of old growth forest he inherited when he took ownership of the property.
- There are over 30 different tree species found on the property along with a wetland created to further enhance the quality and diversity of habitat for the many birds, fish, deer, and fox that frequent the area.
- David was also gracious enough to offer his property as the location for our National Tree Day celebration in September to celebrate the Authority's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and two significant achievements – the planting of over 4 million trees and the creation of over 100 hectares of wetland across the St. Clair Region. He even agreed to let us install a sign on his property to acknowledge these milestones.

David's dedication to protecting and restoring his property highlights the important role our local landowners play in the success of our reforestation efforts, and is thanked for his commitment to conservation.

David Livingstone gave thanks for the Conservation Award nomination and for the ongoing support of Conservation Authority staff, in particular Jessica Van Zwol, Erin Carroll and Jeff Sharp.

### **BD-22-06**

#### **Burrell – Faas**

**“That the Board of Directors congratulates the 2022 Conservation Award Winners and thanks them for their contributions to conservation.”**

**CARRIED**

The 2021 Service Awards were presented.

### **5 Years of Service**

- Jerry Westgate, Director

### **10 Years of Service**

- Donna Blue, Manager of Communications
- Melissa Levi, Conservation Education Coordinator
- George Reuger, Visitor Services, Warwick Conservation Area
- Jeff Sharp, Conservation Services Technician
- Jessica Van Zwol, Healthy Watersheds Specialist

### **15 Years of Service**

- John Campbell, Senior Information Management Analyst
- Betty Ann MacKinnon, Director

### **BD-22-07**

#### **Loosley – Burrell**

**“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the service awards presented to the directors and staff and further that they be thanked for their years of dedicated service.”**

**CARRIED**

The Chair announced the conclusion of 2021 business. The 2022 Board of Directors wishes to welcome Diane Brewer, representing the Village of Newbury and also the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex. Thanks and well wishes were extended to former board member, Mark McGill for his years of service on the Board. The meeting resumed to conduct 2022 business.

**Directors Present:** Al Broad, Pat Brown, John Brennan, Vice Chair; Diane Brewer, Terry Burrell, Bill Dennis, Joe Faas, Aaron Hall, Frank Kennes, Brad Loosley, Betty Ann MacKinnon, Kevin Marriott, Steve Miller, Frank Nemcek, Lorie Scott, Chair; Mike Stark, Jerry Westgate

**Regrets:** Larry Gordon, Dan McMillan, Tim Wilkins

**Staff Present:** Donna Blue, Manager of Communications; Melissa Deisley, Director of Planning and Regulations; Chris Durand, Manager of IT/GIS; Sarah Hodgkiss, Manager of Planning and Natural Heritage; Ashley Fletcher, Administrative Assistant/ Board Coordinator; Tim Payne, Manager of Forestry; Ken Phillips, General Manager; Tracy Prince, Director of Finance; Girish Sankar, Director of Water Resources; Greg Wilcox, Manager of Lands

**BD-22-08**

**Nemcek – Stark**

**“That the Board of Directors acknowledges and complies with the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority’s Code of Conduct and Administrative By-laws.”**

**CARRIED**

**BD-22-09**

**Loosley – Marriott**

**“That Ken Phillips be appointed chair for the election of the 2022 Chair and Vice Chair.”**

**CARRIED**

**BD-22-10**

**Kennes – Scott**

**“That Chris Durand and Donna Blue be appointed scrutineers in the event of an election.”**

**CARRIED**

The positions of Chair and Vice Chair were declared vacant and nominations were called for the Office of Chairman for 2022.

Brad Loosley nominated Mike Stark for the position of Chair.

Nominations for the position of Chair were closed.

Mike Stark advised that he would stand and was declared Chair of the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority for 2022, by acclamation. Mr. Stark gave thanks for the nomination and for the vote of confidence from fellow board members. The following priorities for consideration in the year ahead were outlined:

- The inclusion of departmental presentations during board of director meetings
- Having Chair and Vice Chair involvement during memorandums of understanding (MoU) discussions with member municipalities
- Consideration for the reduction of SCRCA Board members from 20 to 13 by 2024 and the potential to reduce that number to 9 by 2026.

Steve Miller nominated Pat Brown for the position of Vice Chair

Brad Loosley nominated Lorie Scott for the position of Vice Chair

Nominations for the position of Vice Chair were closed

Both Pat Brown and Lorie Scott advised that they wished to stand for position of Vice Chair. An electronic ballot vote commenced, resulting in a majority vote for Pat Brown. Mr. Brown was declared Vice Chair of the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority for 2022

**BD-22-11**

**Mackinnon – Burrell**

**“That the ballots be destroyed.”**

Additional nominations were taken from the floor to complete the membership of the Executive Committee.

**BD-22-12**

**Burrell – Loosley**

**“That the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority adopts the 2021 Nominating Committee's Report.”**

**CARRIED**

**BD-22-13**

**Faas – Brennan**

**“That the 2022 Executive Committee for the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority be:**

**Mike Stark, Chair  
Pat Brown, Vice Chair  
Terry Burrell  
Joe Faas  
Frank Kennes  
Brad Loosley  
Betty Ann MacKinnon  
Steve Miller  
Lorie Scott”**

**CARRIED**

**BD-22-14**

**Burrell – Miller**

**“That the Authority Chair or the Vice-Chair and the General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer or Director of Finance be authorized to borrow from the Libro Credit Union, Strathroy for the general operations and capital program of the Authority, a sum not to exceed \$3,598.372 to be repaid from grants received from the Province of Ontario, Government of Canada, levies assessed to the member municipalities and general revenue.”**

**CARRIED**

**BD-22-15**

**Scott – Nemcek**

**“That MNP Chartered Professional Accountants LLP, be appointed auditors for the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority for 2022.”**

**CARRIED**

**BD-22-16****MacKinnon – Loosley**

**“That the Authority's 2022 representative to Conservation Ontario will be the Authority Chair, the Vice-Chair will be the first alternate and the General Manager be the second alternate.”**

**CARRIED**

- General Manager and Chair Scott attended the Conservation Ontario (CO) Council meeting Dec 13, 2021, via Zoom. CO acknowledged the work of retired SCRCA General Manager Brian MacDougall. The meeting focused on issues pertaining to First Nations/Conservation Authority (CA) relations, changes involving the CA Act and updates from CO staff.
- Attended Conservation Ontario CAO/GM meeting via Zoom on Dec 13, 2021. Meeting centered on transition plans and issues around CA governance and accountability.
- Attended CO Watershed Report Card meeting via Zoom to prepare for submission of latest reports later in 2022. Need for reports to be made more accessible and contain more data per Auditor Generals Recommendations.
- Had a meeting with legal counsel and Town of Warwick staff Jan 5 regarding outstanding parcel of land at Warwick CA.
- Had a discussion Jan 12 with Brooke-Alvinston staff regarding some issues at A.W. Campbell CA. SCRCA staff will work with town staff to come up with possible solutions.
- Attended Flood Action Committee meeting via Zoom Jan 13. Became acquainted with protocols around ice jams.
- Attended sessions on session by CO on Jan 17, Jan 31 and Feb 7 to ensure Inventory work was on schedule and that SCRCA was compatible with other CAs.
- Met with landowner in Chatham-Kent Feb 1 to discuss flooding issues in his property.
- Met with Vince Gagner of BASES Feb 3 to discuss the relationship between the two organizations

**BD-22-17****Faas - Marriott**

**“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the General Manager’s report dated February 7, 2022.”**

**CARRIED**

As part of Bill 229, Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020, the Province of Ontario began the process of amending the Conservation Authorities Act (CA Act). The Province subsequently established a framework of regulations under which CAs where to operate going forward.



On October 4, 2021, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) released the Phase 1 regulations to implement amendments to the CA Act. The following regulations were included in the Phase 1 release:

- Ontario Regulation 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services
- Ontario Regulation 687/21: Transition Plans and Agreements for Programs and Services
- Ontario Regulation 688/21: Rules of Conduct in Conservation Areas.

Ontario Regulation 687/21: Transition Plans and Agreements for Programs and Services, required the SCRCA to create a Transition Plan that outlined the development of an inventory of programs and services divided into Categories 1-3 as well as the process to enter into agreements with participating municipalities to fund Category 2: Municipal Programs and Services.

The SCRCA Board of Directors approved the Authority's Transition Plan at the December 9, 2021 Board meeting and the plan was subsequently submitted to the MECP, watershed Municipalities and provided to the public via the SCRCA website. The next item required under the regulation is to develop an inventory of SCRCA programs and services. The inventory is required to include a list of all programs and services offered by the SCRCA as of February 28, 2022, and those the organization intends to potentially offer in the future. The inventory must include sources of funding, costing and categorization of all programs and services into one of three specific categories:

- Category 1: Mandatory programs and services as identified in Ontario Regulation 686/21. These programs are eligible to be funded through general municipal levy. (e.g. Flood Forecast and Warning)
- Category 2: Municipal programs and services that are provided at the request of the municipality. These programs can be funded through self-generated revenue, government and other agency grants and/or municipal funding under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or agreement with the municipality. (e.g. Operation of Local Conservation Areas)
- Category 3: Other programs and services that an Authority (Board) determines are advisable. These programs can be funded through self-generated revenue, user fees, government and other agency grants, donations, etc. Any use of municipal funding will require an agreement and would be subject to cost apportioning (e.g. Environmental Education)

The Inventory of Programs and Services must be viewed as a living and evolving document that will change during the transition period. It is anticipated and expected that refinements will be incorporated as the SCRCA proceeds in discussions with municipal partners in structuring MOUs and future budgets. As the regulation requires that the Inventory provide a 5-year historical average of expenses, the expenses do not take into consideration inflationary costs and do not represent 2022 expenses to deliver these programs and services. The Board of Directors is also reminded that funding and funding sources for many of SCRCA's programs vary from year to year.

The full Inventory of Programs and Services was reviewed.

**Director Comments:**

Director Al Broad requested an amendment to the inventory list clarifying that Water Erosion Control and Infrastructure (WECI) projects are covered by federal grants and *participating* municipalities.

**BD-22-18**

**Scott – Miller**

**“That the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority’s (SCRCA) Inventory of Programs and Services be endorsed; and that the Inventory of Programs and Services be circulated to the MECP, Conservation Ontario, all watershed Municipalities and to be posted on the SCRCA website.”**

**CARRIED**

The report on business arising was reviewed.

***(a) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report on business arising dated Feb 9, 2022.***

**Highlights:**

- Flood potential is low to moderate, with lower water levels on the Sydenham River, moderate snowpack across the region, and ice jam potential on the St. Clair River
- Six and twelve-month precipitation trends are near normal, with short-term amounts below normal due to below-normal snowfall (Table 1)
- Lakes Huron, St. Clair and Erie are down compared to a year ago, however still remain well above their 100-year average (Table 2). Levels are predicted to decline over the coming months (Figure 1).

**Watershed Conditions**

**Flood Threat**

Flood potential in the watershed is currently low to moderate owing to lower water levels on the Great Lakes and Sydenham River, with approximately one metre freeboard in Wallaceburg.

Over the course of the next two months, freeze-thaw temperature fluctuations, snowmelt and rain will be the prominent concerns leading to flooding within the watershed. These, combined with strong winds, will also have the potential to create conditions favourable to ice jamming.

**Precipitation**

- High amounts of rainfall in September and October greatly surpassed normal amounts and continue to leverage the six and twelve-month precipitation trends to normal values

- Lower amounts of rainfall and snow in the last quarter have resulted in well below normal precipitation averages across the region

### **Lake Levels**

- Compared to January 2021, Lake Huron has seen a drop in water level of 47 cm, Lake St. Clair of 46 cm and Lake Erie of 52 cm
- All lakes remain well above their mean water levels, ranging from 29 cm to 52 cm above average, however continue to be below maximum monthly means, ranging from 32 cm to 66 cm
- Lakes are forecasted to continue dropping towards seasonal average levels in the coming months (Figure 1, below)

***(b) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated February 10, 2022 regarding current watershed conditions and Great Lakes water levels.***

### **Old Lakeshore Road near Penhuron Drive Shoreline Improvements**

- Contract was awarded to Van Bree drainage and Bulldozing
- All permits for this work have been obtained
- Shoreline work started mid-January
- Expected date of completion – June, 2022

### **Port Lambton Park Shoreline project**

The project site is in Port Lambton along the east shore of the St. Clair River. The site includes a shoreline starting at the north of Queen Street and stretches south a distance of approximately 240 meters. The current shoreline of the site includes varying structures, steel sheet pile wall supported by timber piles, concrete rubble, stacked concrete. The condition of the shoreline is poor and needs restoration.

- Contract has been awarded to Dicocco Contracting Ltd
- All permits have been obtained
- Construction work started beginning of February, 2022
- Expected date of completion – June, 2022

***(c) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated February 8, 2022 on the ongoing shoreline projects across the watershed.***

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority has completed its work with Parsons Inc. on the development of an engineering and design plan for managing mercury-contaminated sediment in three priority areas of the St. Clair River.

After assessing the extensive amount of new data that was collected in 2019 and 2020, in conjunction with historical data, the consultant concluded that:

- There have been significant decreases in mercury concentrations in surface sediment compared to historical results due to natural recovery.

- As a result, there are currently no measurable risks to fish presented by mercury in sediment.
- This is supported by the fact that the risk-based goal of an average of 3mg/kg mercury in the surface sediment, to be protective of fish, has already been met in each priority area and at the two buried deposits.
- Re-exposure of the subsurface buried mercury is unlikely.
- An erosion resistant cover is recommended in focused areas within priority areas 1, 2 and 3 to enhance erosion protection and decrease mercury concentrations at the surface.
- The planned remedial actions will achieve the sediment management goals and remedial action objectives.

The SCRCA, with support from Parsons where required, held 8 information sessions to present the results of the field work and the recommended remedial approach. Presentations were made to Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Walpole Island First Nation, regulatory agencies, local industry, local municipalities, the Canadian Remedial Action Plan Implementation Committee, and the Binational Public Advisory Council for the St. Clair River Remedial Action Plan. A Community Information Session was also held for anyone that was interested in participating, including local media. The session was recorded and subsequently posted to SCRCA's web site. The questions and answers from the session were also posted.

Parsons submitted the draft design plan to the SCRCA in August 2021, which was also shared with representatives on the Oversight Committee. All parties involved reviewed the draft plan and provided comments to Parsons for consideration prior to finalizing the plan.

**Update:**

Additional discussions were held with Parsons on the proposed Water Quality Monitoring Plan to confirm what type of sampling should be conducted during implementation, where it should be conducted, and at what frequency.

Additional discussions were held with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, so that requirements under the federal Species at Risk Act and provincial Endangered Species Act could be incorporated into the design plan.

Parsons finalized the engineering and design plan and submitted it to the SCRCA in December 2021 for review. The SCRCA and Oversight Committee members reviewed the final plan and confirmed acceptance on January 31, 2022.

A letter has been sent out to stakeholders and local Indigenous communities making them aware of the report having been finalized, and informing them that the report is available on SCRCA's website.

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority's role in this stage of the project was to focus on the development of the sediment management and remedial design report. Now that the report is finalized, it will support discussions around implementation. The roles and responsibilities of the various parties during the implementation phase have not yet been determined so information on timing is not yet available.

**Strategic Objectives(s):**

Ensure that our rivers, lakes and streams are properly safeguarded, managed and restored.

**Financial Impact:**

The project work was completed within the established budget. The cost to prepare the plan was approximately \$1 million. Monthly invoices received from Parsons were reviewed to ensure that costs incurred aligned with the key project deliverables and the contract agreement. Cost recovery occurred on a quarterly basis with costs shared amongst each of the funding partners in accordance with the funding agreements.

***(d) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated February 3, 2022 on the on-going project work on the Engineering and Design Plan for the Management of the Contaminated Sediment in the St. Clair River.***

The monthly planning activity summary report, for the period November 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022 was reviewed.

***(e) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority's monthly Planning Activity Summary Report, dated February 10, 2022 for the period from November 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022.***

The monthly regulations activity summary report, for the period November 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022 was reviewed.

***(f) That the Board of Directors acknowledges and concurs with the Regulations Activity Summary Report dated February 10, 2022 on "Development, Interference with Wetlands & Alterations to Shorelines & Watercourses" Regulations (Ontario Regulation 171/06) from November 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022.***

To encourage uptake and implementation of best management practices (BMPs) and stewardship amongst farmers and rural landowners within our watershed, SCRCA provides relevant information regarding the building of soil health, conservation, and water quality through workshops, conferences, newsletters and social media. To ensure we share good quality information to landowners, we have established various partnerships within the agricultural and research communities.

These are some ways we collate relevant information to disseminate to farmers and landowners in our watershed:

- We worked with Dr. Laura Van Eerd of University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus to create a student project to create infographics for SCRCA social media that highlight aquatic species at risk and how on-land stewardship actions by landowners in our watershed could help protect them. These infographics were shared on Facebook and Instagram. Some of Dr. Van Eerd's students are from our watershed and are familiar with the Sydenham River (funded through Fisheries and Oceans Canada, DFO).
- January 11 - 21 - SCRCA Biologists gave a talk "Protecting Aquatic Species at Risk in Ontario: A Day in the Life of a Conservation Biologist" to 7,187 students attending livestreaming events where SCRCA staff spoke about day-to-day life about studying aquatic species at risk in the Sydenham River.
- January 26 - Jessica Van Zwol, Healthy Watershed Specialist and Emily Febrey, Stewardship Communications Technician coordinated a virtual Soil Health Conference, that featured 18 speakers who were farmers from our watershed (and beyond), Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) staff, Conservation Authority staff, Certified Crop Advisors, and other soil experts. This event saw over 130 registrants (101 participants the day of) and was geared to SCRCA farmers and how we can work together to build healthier soils through BMPs and knowledge sharing. Through a participant survey, staff were able to gather data on how well the conference was received; 93% of respondents stated that they were equipped with new knowledge and ideas to incorporate into their farming. One participant even stated: "I was overwhelmed at the amount of knowledge there is on soil health. Excellent conference". This event was shared widely on social media, by word of mouth and an array of publications. The Soil Health Conference was funded in part by OMAFRA and DFO. All ten (10) sessions can be found on the SCRCA YouTube here: [https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfbrRj3-5Wl17uvlvIWro\\_9Zui3v68vPd](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfbrRj3-5Wl17uvlvIWro_9Zui3v68vPd). The videos were uploaded January 31 and already have been viewed 200 times.
- January 27 - Craig Paterson, Conservation Biologist gave a talk to the Issues and Advancements in Fish and Wildlife Course at Fleming College. At the lecture he outlined career path, job opportunities and all aquatic SAR monitoring and research conducted at SCRCA. These types of presentations help attract top-level job candidates to SCRCA's various contract positions.
- December 7 & 8, 2021, Craig Paterson gave a presentation "Summary of St. Clair Region Conservation Authority Sampling of Freshwater Mussel Populations in the Sydenham River" at The Canadian Freshwater Mollusc Research Meeting. He highlighted the findings of the 2021 summer mussel monitoring program and beyond. About 150 specialists attended his talk from across Canada. This presentation put research work research conducted by SCRCA on stage for peer input by the nation's top mussel researchers.
- October 28, 2021 - Craig Paterson gave a talk "Desperation not Conservation: A Conservation Authority's Attempt to Save One of Canada's Most Endangered Freshwater Turtles" for the Ontario chapter of the Wildlife Society membership, outlining SCRCA's Captive Hatch and Release program for the endangered

Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle. Monthly webinar series. This type of networking and sharing among peers allows SCRCA to continue to improve and evolve programs.

Staff continue to work on projects that aim to improve the health of the watershed by engaging the local community and experts in identifying and addressing environmental issues. These projects include:

- Sydenham Watershed Phosphorus Management Plan being undertaken with financial support from Environment and Climate Change Canada as well as the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks Great Lakes Program
- Sydenham River Aquatic Species at Risk Threat Inventory being undertaken with funding from the DFO Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk.

### **Funding Applications:**

The Biology department is self-funded from a number of grants and contracts with Provincial, Federal and municipal governments. Recent grant applications include:

- DFO Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk – submitted December, 2021 - Requested \$42,500 for 2022-2023 to support the development of the Sydenham River Aquatic Species at Risk Threat Inventory
- Nature Canada Winter Youth Grant– submitted December 2021, secured 50% support for a Stewardship Communications Technician for January-March, 2022
- ECCC EcoAction - submitted January, 2022 - Requested \$100,000 over 2022-2024 to support on the ground phosphorus reduction projects and outreach programs
- ECCC Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk – 2022-2023 – submitted Jan 22, 2022 – Requested \$95,000 over three years towards SCRCA's Captive Hatch and Release Program for Spiny Softshells.
- Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, Skills Development Fund - Round 2 (Fall 2021) February, 2022 - Asked for \$178,000 for to hire 3 aquatic interns for 12 months each.
- MECP Great Lakes Local Action Fund – grant application, in progress submission, deadline March 11, 2022. Looking for provincial funding support for Spotted Gar habitat at the Keith McLean property in Rondeau.

### **Grant Updates:**

- Ontario Nature (through MECP Species at Risk Stewardship Program) - submitted January 2021, notified December 2021 that SCRCA will receive \$15,000 in support of Spiny Softshell turtle outreach and education activities for April 2021 to March 2022. Among other things, this funding will go towards development of mini-documentary, virtual SAR education programming and social media posts. SCRCA should receive contribution agreement shortly.
- EcoCanada submitted February, 2022 - asked for support for a Watershed Monitoring Technician. EcoCanada pays up to 80% for up to a year. This funding request was denied.

- MECP COA (HLH)- submitted June 2021. \$60,000 - support for the Healthy Lake Huron Program in Lambton Shores for April 2022-March 2023. We are awaiting a contribution agreement for signature.
- MECP Ontario Community Environment Fund – submitted June 2021 – Requested \$80,800 for September 2021- October 2022 to support our Healthy Watersheds Program, landowner stewardship project implementation and a bank stabilization project at Warwick Conservation Area. We have been told an announcement should be made soon.
- MECP COA –submitted July 2021. \$115,000 – support for the Sydenham River Phosphorus Management Plan for April 2021-March 2023. We are awaiting a contribution agreement for signature.
- Wildlife Habitat Canada – submitted October, 2021, requesting \$45,000 for Restoring Wetlands and improving wetland awareness in the St. Clair Region project for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. We were informed February 2022 that this project was denied.
- DFO Canada Nature Fund of Aquatic Species at Risk, submitted October 2021. Requested: \$1.5M for Ecosystem Approach for Recovery of Species at Risk in the St. Clair Watershed in Canada (with a focus on the Sydenham River). This application was not funded. This grant was to cover stewardship, education and outreach and aquatic monitoring programs. Although salaries and wages are eligible costs in this program, we were advised that our application was turned down because our request for this category was too high.
- DFO Canada Nature Fund of Aquatic Species at Risk, submitted November 2021. Requested \$172,000 from 2022 to 2026 for the construction of Spotted Gar habitat at the Keith Mclean Property in Rondeau. We have heard that this project will only partially be supported. Presently, it is unknown what percent of the overall ask SCRCA will receive.

**Strategic Objective(s):**

The Biology and Healthy Watershed Programs fulfil Goals 2 and 3 of the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority strategic objectives; Protect, manage, and restore our natural systems including woodlands, wetlands, waterways, and lakes and provide recreation and education opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn from our natural environment. The objective is being achieved through the strategic action; Develop new tools to promote stewardship practices and evaluate the effectiveness of Best Management Practices and Focus on Programs to Reduce Phosphorous Loading into the Great Lakes.

***(g) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated February 3, 2022 on Healthy Watersheds Program and Biology Department Update***

As of 2018, all eight turtle species that call Ontario home are designated as species at risk, including the well-known Painted Turtle. All face declines driven by human activities. Many are facing imminent extinction without the intervention of conservation efforts like SCRCA's Captive Hatch and Release Program. The program was founded in 2016 following 22 years of research and monitoring by several organizations including SCRCA



to determine population sizes and nesting locations. Efforts are targeted towards Canada's most aquatic turtle, the endangered Eastern Spiny Softshell. It is estimated only 1000 individuals remain in our rivers, lakes and streams.

**Requirements for Success:**

From early June to July, turtle nesting locations that are at risk of predation or destruction within the watershed are monitored by SCRCA biologists, who also investigate sightings reported by local residents. This requires a seven day a week commitment and collaboration with the Upper Thames Region Conservation Authority and Salthaven Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center to effectively monitor, locate, excavate and incubate turtle eggs. During August and September, turtle eggs begin to hatch. Hatchlings are collected daily and biology staff return each hatchling to the collection site for release.

**2021 Results:**

2021 marked the 6<sup>th</sup> year of SCRCA's Captive Hatch and Release program for turtles at risk and the most successful year on record. An incredible 2188 turtle hatchlings were released. Although the program focuses on the endangered Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle, eggs from five native turtle species at risk were rescued and the hatchlings were released including 1,187 Spiny Softshell, 590 special concern Northern Map Turtle, 343 special concern Snapping Turtle, 56 special concern Midland Painted Turtle, and 12 threatened Blanding's Turtle.

To amplify the significance of the 2021 results, in 2016 only 67 Softshell hatchlings were located and released.

**Financial Impact:**

Although the results from this program often provide a 'feel good story', capturing the hearts and imagination of local residents of all ages, its existence is not absolute. Funding for this program is obtained through self generated revenue and external grant proposals, resulting in a lack of funding consistency and continued year-to-year risk assessments on the future of the program. It is imperative this work be conducted each and every year.

Even though the success of the program has dramatically increased, the consistency of funding has not.

***(h) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated February 10, 2022 on the results from the Captive Hatch and Release program conducted by SCRCA Biology in 2021.***

**Fall Education Program Summary**

COVID-19 continues to impact Conservation Education. While some aspects of St. Clair Conservation's Education traditional programs have resumed, other aspects of Conservation Education continue to adapt and evolve. We are thrilled to be able to share our successes.

**Traditional Field Trips at L.C. Henderson Conservation Area:** Some schools/school boards announced that field trips were once again permitted beginning September of 2021. St Clair staff responded quickly to accommodate this change; hosting a total of 775 students (from seven of SCRCA's member municipalities). Changes to the number of classes/schools attending the site per day, program locations, and sanitization practices were implemented to minimize potential participant/staff exposure to COVID-19.

**Nature In Your Neighbourhood:** St. Clair continues to offer schoolyard programming for schools that remain unable to visit the Conservation Area. This program choice was delivered to 929 students (favoured by two of SCRCA's member Municipalities). French language schools continue to access Nature in Your Neighbourhood programs, with over 200 French language students benefiting in the fall of 2022.

**Live-Stream with a Naturalist:** This program format continues to be in high demand. A total of 493 students participated this fall – the program was particularly popular among our French language participants with both local and 'out of watershed' schools.

### **Aquatic Species at Risk Webinars - Funded by Canada Nature Fund January 10 – January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

During the provincially mandated return to at-home virtual learning in early January 2022, St. Clair Education staff acted quickly to assist teachers and students. In an attempt to engage as many at-home learners as possible, a new 'webinar-style' live-stream Aquatic Species at Risk program was created. St. Clair's Biology team partnered with Education staff to add their expertise to the webinars. Two teachers from local school boards (Lambton Kent District School Board and Conseil Scolaire Catholique Providence) volunteered to moderate the sessions. The feedback from teachers was exceptional. Over the course of just 8 days, the SCRCA connected with 7,187 students (in both French and English, Kindergarten to Gr 12) from across the watershed (and the province).

Teacher Feedback for Aquatic Species at Risk Webinars:

"INCREDIBLE, as always, Melissa and team. I'm always singing your praises to anyone who will listen and you never disappoint." – Matt S.

"Thanks so much. All teachers appreciate having other options while being stuck online, but in addition to that, you always teach us so much. Your ability to teach is really top notch. Seeing you outside was a nice change of scenery too. My students were active and really enjoyed it. Many stayed on till the very end, even though we ended (class) a little before that. Keep up the great work." – Adam M.

“So that was incredible! Well done! The kids and I loved it. It was nice to be able to interact with the kids while you walked and taught. And now we want to know all about fish and turtles! Thank you for the time and effort. It means a lot. :)” – Jean B

### **Winter Education Programs**

St. Clair Conservation continues to offer programming in-person outdoors and virtually in the classroom. Free Sponsored programs continue to be a good option for the winter months. St Clair is fully booked for all sponsored programs that are currently offered. For a full list of our current programs check [www.scrca.on.ca/govirtual](http://www.scrca.on.ca/govirtual).

**Phosphorus 101:** Sponsored by Friends of the St. Clair River and EcoAction Canada, this program introduces students between Grades 8-12 to the issue of phosphorus loading into our watershed and Lake Erie. The live-stream version of the program was fully booked within a few days of its launch; approximately 400 students will participate in 2022.

**Watershed 101:** Friends of the St. Clair River continue to sponsor this live-stream program which focuses on the interconnectivity between land and water. Students in Grades 6-8 will ‘tour’ the conservation area, learning about watershed management and how ‘what happens upstream impacts downstream’. This program is fully booked for 2022 with approximately 425 students expected to participate.

**Spring Water Awareness Schoolyard Program:** Plains-Midstream Canada continues to sponsor this program. Staff are developing a ‘Schoolyard’ version for delivery in April. Students will learn how fast, cold, flood water creates ‘dangerous water’ through a series of activities and games on their schoolyard. The program is fully booked for 2022; approximately 800 students will participate. Due to the exceptional response from teachers, a waiting list has been created.

**Bluewater Association for Safety, Environment and Sustainability (BASES) Programming:** Program development is well underway for the “What’s in the Water” (FDK) and “Lights, Energy, Action!” (Grade 1) programs, which will be delivered in a hybrid format. Teachers and students will receive all the materials for a hands-on experience in the classroom, which will be led virtually by an SCRCA Educator. Pilot tests were highly successful and received excellent feedback. Over 20 teachers (~450 students) have already expressed interest in booking the program.

**Maple Syrup Program:** This fee-based program is being offered in two formats for March, 2022. Students can participate via ‘Live-Stream with a Naturalist’ or in-person for a traditional field trip at the A.W. Campbell Conservation Area. Both options are nearly fully booked, with approximately 350 students participating over a two-week period.

### **Webinar Programs – New 2022**

St. Clair Education is now offering fee-based webinars to our local school boards. As per direction from the SCRCA Board of Directors, the fee for these webinars is \$500.00 for a 1-hour webinar. Lambton Kent District School Board has booked 12 webinars for the winter/spring 2022 season.

### **Kettle and Stony Point First Nation – Canadian Nature Fund, Year 3**

St. Clair Staff continue to work closely with the Principal, Ojibwee Language program, and Hillside teachers to assist with the development and delivery of the land-based education initiative this school year (September, 2021 - June, 2022). Staff have been visiting the school weekly to take ‘bushwalks’ with each grade in the school (Kindergarten-Gr 8). Outdoor Education ‘bushwalks’ involve a walking field trip to a local woodlot to participate in various Conservation Education programs.

***(i) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the Conservation Education Progress report dated February 7, 2022.***

### **A.W. Campbell Maple Syrup Festival**

Date: Saturday, March 19 to Sunday, March 20, 2022

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Location: A.W. Campbell Conservation Area

### **Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race**

TO BE CONFIRMED

Date: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Start Location: Mossie Line at Sydenham River End Location: Shetland Conservation Area

### **Denning’s Memorial Walk to Remember**

Date: Saturday, June 18, 2022

Time: To Be Confirmed

Location(s): To be Confirmed, Strathroy

### **Ipperwash Beach Shoreline Clean-up**

TO BE CONFIRMED

Date: Saturday, September 10, 2022 (Tentative)

Time: 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Location: Centre Ipperwash Beach Boat Launch

### **A Geocaching Adventure**

Date: Sunday, September 11, 2022

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area

## **Foundation Memorial Forest Dedication**

Date - Sunday, September 25, 2022

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Location: Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area

### **Directors Comments:**

Director Frank Nemcek highlighted the upcoming Maple Syrup Festival, in Brooke-Alvinston and enquired whether SCRCA staff would be delivering maple syrup demonstrations, as in past years. General Manager, Ken Phillips stated that a meeting to discuss the Maple Syrup Festival is scheduled. It is the intention of SCRCA to deliver programming during this event, however changing COVID-19 protocols may necessitate change.

***(j) That the Board of Directors acknowledges the 2022 schedule of Special Events outlined in the attached flyer.***

### **BD-22-19**

#### **Kennes – Scott**

**“That the Board of Directors approves the consent agenda and endorses the recommendations accompanying Items 16.1 a - 16.1 j.”**

**CARRIED**

A number of policies govern camping and day use of SCRCA’s Conservation Areas. Policies have been developed/updated to communicate SCRCA’s rules and regulations to the public. The following updated Conservation Areas Policies were reviewed:

- Day Use and Facilities
- Overnight Camping
- Overnight Camping Reservations and Information

### **Day Use and Facilities**

The “Day Use and Facilities” Policies and Regulations document is newly developed. This document aligns day use policies with camping policies wherever possible. This document will be made available to the public on-line. The content of this document aligns with current operations; no significant changes have been made to the Authorities Day Use rules.

### **Overnight Camping**

The “Overnight Camping” Policies and Regulations document has been updated to align with the seasonal camping policy that was updated in 2021. The only significant change is that golf carts will only be permitted for seasonal campers. The collection of liability insurance documentation, signed golf cart rules, and applicable fees is too difficult for transient campers.

## Overnight Camping Reservations and Information

Regulation	Change from Previous
Minimum stay on Holiday weekends	Now includes Canada when the holiday falls on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or Monday
Cancellation within 24 hrs of reservation qualify for partial refund (excluding reservation fee, cancellation fee, and 1 night's camping fee)	Partial refund was provided (excluded reservation fee and cancellation fee)
Explanation of AW Campbell CA group camping reservations	Was not previously included in reservation policy

### BD-22-20

#### MacKinnon – Miller

**“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated January 24, 2022 on the Conservation Areas Policies and Regulations for Day Use and Facilities, Overnight Camping, and Overnight Camping Reservations and Information, and further permits the implementation of minor updates in future years.”**

**CARRIED**

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) accepted applications for funding in the fall of 2021 for their Community Building Fund – Capital Stream program. This funding program is intended to help organizations repair, renovate, or retrofit existing sport and recreation facilities to help strengthen communities.

SCRCA submitted an application to extend the life of facilities and improve accessibility of recreational trails at four Conservation Areas. OTF has approved \$246,500 in funding to complete the four trail upgrades.

### Project Description

#### 1. Coldstream CA Boardwalk

The Coldstream boardwalk takes hikers through a Provincially Significant Wetland and along the headwaters of the Sydenham River. This project will rebuild approximately 200m of aging boardwalk to extend the life of the trail system and improve accessibility. The new boardwalk will be wider, have gradual slopes, and include edge protection. The existing boardwalk has aging lumber that contains significant rot, and requires regular repairs to remain operational. The total boardwalk is approximately 365m long; 165m was replaced in 2021.

#### 2. Clark Wright CA Boardwalk

The Clark Wright CA is a 50-acre rural property with 3km of trail through reforested hardwood and pine plantations. The trail system contains 44 ten-foot sections of boardwalk in numerous wet areas of the property. This project will rebuild all 44 sections of aging boardwalk to extend the life of the trail system and improve accessibility. The new boardwalk will be wider, have gradual slopes, and include

edge protection. The existing boardwalk has aging lumber that contains significant rot, and requires regular repairs to remain operational.

3. Strathroy CA Trail

The Strathroy Conservation Area offers 3km of trails through beautiful floodplain forest including Provincially Significant Wetlands, and the Sydenham River. This trail system connects community trails on either side of the property and is used by many as a travel corridor through town. This project will upgrade an existing narrow chip and dust trail loop that varies in width to a minimum 2m wide chip and dust trail surface, improving accessibility for users. The upgraded trail section will be 1050m long.

4. Wawanosh Wetlands CA Trail

Wawanosh Wetlands Conservation Area trails are approximately 3km long and take visitors along a Provincially Significant Wetland providing opportunities for wildlife viewing. The trail also travels along a young forest plantation and is a popular spot for hikers, birders, cyclers, and dog walkers. This project will upgrade 1225m of existing grass/bare soil trail to 2m wide chip and dust. The upgraded trail route is very level and will make an excellent location for improved accessibility.

**Financial Impact:**

The OTF funding will cover the anticipated costs of the four recreational trail upgrades.

**BD-22-21**

**Brown – Marriott**

**“That the Board of Directors acknowledge the report dated February 7, 2022 on the funding received from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.”**

**CARRIED**

The Coldstream Conservation Area was acquired through multiple property purchases during the 1960's and 70's. The property includes day use facilities, the Sydenham River, a dam/reservoir, woodlot, and wetland. There is an existing trail at the south end of the Conservation Area taking you through a cedar swamp, a rare experience in Southwestern Ontario. The cedar swamp is designated a Provincially Significant Wetland. The park also contains facilities including washrooms, a soccer field, playground, volleyball court, and a pavilion. The reservoir located on the property is used for fishing, paddling, and wildlife viewing.

The Municipality of Middlesex Centre (formerly the Township of Lobo) entered into a lease agreement to manage/maintain Coldstream CA in 1997. At this time, the Envirofriends of Coldstream (a local community group) entered into an agreement with the Municipality to operate Coldstream Conservation Area. The most recent lease agreement was for 2012-2021. The Municipality chose not to renew the lease agreement and the Authority resumed management and maintenance of the Conservation Area on January 1, 2022.

## **Coldstream Conservation Area Update:**

The uses of the Conservation Area have changed over the last 25 years. Camping is no longer offered, bacteria levels in the reservoir haven't allowed for swimming in decades, and soccer fields are rarely used (one was abandoned a number of years ago). The Conservation Area is very popular for hiking, dog walking, nature viewing, and picnicing. Staff recommendations are mapped and described below for updates to the CA and rehabilitation of the areas of the property no longer in use.

1. Trail restoration north of Coldstream Rd.
  - This area is not currently identified with onsite signage as part of the Conservation Area
  - Low usage has led to significant off-road vehicle use and damage
  - Provincially Significant Wetland and rare/sensitive plants are present in this area
  - Desire from the community for trail access
  - Improved trails/signage and increased use is a good opportunity to deter off-road vehicle use
  - Funding secured through Canada Nature Fund to restore trails, add signage, and block off-road vehicle river crossings
2. Close some trail sections and block off-road vehicle river crossings
  - Use logs and other methods to deter use of closed trails
  - Add signage identifying the authorized trails network and the closed trail sections
  - Funding secured through Canada Nature Fund
3. Expand parking lot and add signage to identify the property as part of the Conservation Area
  - Will encourage authorized use of the trail system
  - Will contribute to reducing off-road vehicle use and river crossing
  - Small parking lot exists (2 cars), could be expanded to park 5-6
  - Not currently funded, application submitted to Nature London, Coldstream reserve could fund a portion of this upgrade
4. Tree planting in the old campground area and half of abandoned soccer field
  - Municipal and Authority staff inspected the campground area and agreed to discontinue this activity in 2019
  - The area does not contain enough campsites to be staffed and be financially self-sufficient
  - A trail loop will be maintained and the remaining area will be planted with trees
  - The abandoned soccer field has not been mowed/maintained in many years; naturalization is a great option for this area
  - Funding secured through the Canada Nature Smart Fund to plant trees
5. Washroom Decommissioning
  - Decommission 3 pit and vault privies (2 located in old campground area and 1 located by soccer fields)
  - Old infrastructure is in poor condition



- No hydro or water to these buildings
  - Not required with camping discontinued and lack of use of the soccer fields
  - One washroom is within 15m of Sydenham River, there is potential for contamination leaching to the river
  - All 3 of these facilities are within 500m of the main washroom building
  - Decommissioning has been included in a Biology Department funding application submitted to EcoAction Grant
  - Coldstream reserve could fund a portion of this work
6. Pollinator Habitat Creation
- Municipal staff have expressed interest in pollinator habitat creation at the Coldstream CA
  - Two locations have been identified for pollinator habitat (small area between maintained soccer field and old campground, and a portion of the retired soccer field next to the Quaker Lane parking lot)
  - Funding secured through the Canada Nature Smart Fund
7. Investigate opportunities for restoration of the main washroom building
- This building contains men's and women's washrooms, showers, and an old concession/kitchen area
  - The building has not operated during COVID-19 and Municipal staff have advised that some plumbing issues are present
  - Staff need to investigate the plumbing issues and the condition of the building to determine costs to rehabilitate
  - Building will remain closed for 2022
8. Replacement of a bridge connecting both sides of the Conservation Area
- The bridge replacement was proposed by the Envirofriends of Coldstream a number of years ago
  - They have fundraised for multiple years to raise more than \$51,000 towards a new bridge
  - The Poplar Hill Lions Club has committed to \$50,000 in funding towards the bridge replacement
  - A contractor has been secured and work is anticipated to occur in spring or summer 2022
9. Boardwalk Replacement
- This 1200 foot raised boardwalk trail through a cedar swamp is very popular for property visitors
  - This boardwalk is nearing end of life and requires regular repairs and tread replacement
  - Funding was secured through the Great Lakes Local Action Fund (Ontario) in 2021 to replace 550', this was completed with staff and volunteer labour
  - This will improve the safety of the property for trail users
  - Funding has been secured to replace the remaining 650' of boardwalk in 2022 through Ontario Trillium Foundation funding

#### 10. Dam Decommissioning Study

- Studies are being completed on both the Strathroy and Coldstream dams to assess the potential for removal
- Studies will be completed in 2022
- Funding secured through the provincial WECl program, the St. Clair Conservation Foundation, and both Municipalities

#### 11. Portable washrooms to be Located in Quaker Lane parking lot in 2022

- The pit and vault privies are no longer in a condition suitable for use
- The main washroom building needs investigation into plumbing issues and costs to rehabilitate
- Portable washrooms will be located in the main parking lot for the 2022 season
- Included in 2022 special levy budget

#### Financial Impact:

Property Upgrade	Funding Secured or Proposed	Funding Source
1&2 – Trail Rehabilitation, Closures, and Signs	\$13,000 Secured	Canada Nature Fund (DFO)
3 – Parking Lot Expansion	\$5000 Proposed \$5000 Proposed	Nature London Eco Grant Coldstream CA Reserve
4&6 – Tree Planting and Pollinator Habitat in old Campground and Abandoned Soccer Field	\$8700 Secured	Canada Nature Smart (ECCC)
5 – Washroom Decommissioning	\$6,375 Proposed \$2,876.33 Proposed	EcoAction (Federal) Coldstream CA Reserve
7 – Investigate Plumbing Issues and Rehabilitation Costs of Washroom Building	Staff Time	SCRCA
8 – New Bridge	\$51,000 Secured \$50,000 Secured	Envirofriends of Coldstream Poplar Hill Lions
9 – Boardwalk Replacement	\$36,500 Secured and Work Complete (2021) \$83,175 Secured	Great Lakes Local Action Fund (Ontario) Ontario Trillium Foundation
10 – Dam Decommissioning Study	\$105,000 Secured	WECl, SCRCA, Middlesex-Centre, Strathroy-Caradoc
11 – Portable Washrooms	~\$130/month each (seasonal)	Special Levy, Middlesex-Centre

The Coldstream CA has a reserve account totalling \$7,876.33 that is restricted use for water quality improvements. This reserve was acquired through penalties paid for a spill at a property upstream of the Conservation Area.

The decommissioning of pit and vault privies that are in close proximity to the river would ensure that leachate does not migrate to the river adversely influencing water quality.

The parking lot expansion north of Coldstream Rd. is intended to increase public use of the trails. With increased use of this portion of the Conservation Area, staff hope that off-road vehicle use will be deterred. Off-road vehicles are regularly crossing the river at three locations on this property and could potentially leak gas/oil into the river. Additionally, off-road vehicles driving through the river increase erosion and sediment transport, which adversely effects water quality.

Staff propose the use of these reserve funds to match grant funding to complete the two projects described above.

**Directors Comments:**

Chair, Mike Stark enquired regarding the reserve funds are adequate and accessible for the purpose of the proposed projects. Manager of Conservation Areas, Greg Wilcox confirmed that decommissioning of the washrooms meets the requirements of the reserve, which is restricted to use for projects that improve or protect water quality. The additional proposed projects within the report are dependent upon grant funding.

**BD-22-22**

**Burrell – Scott**

**“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report on the Coldstream Conservation Area, dated February 4, 2022, and further authorizes the decommissioning of three pit and vault washrooms, and further authorizes the use of the Coldstream Conservation Area Reserve Funds for parking lot upgrades and washroom decommissioning.”**

**CARRIED**

During the 1970’s the Campbell House Museum typically operated a few days per week from May to September. Operating costs were funded through Ontario’s Historical and Museums Branch. At some point in time during the 1980s, the Museum hours of operation changed and it only opened one weekend each year during the Maple Syrup festival. It continued to operate in this fashion until 2001. In 2001, the Museum was broken into and a number of artifacts were stolen. The Museum has not operated since 2001.

In September of 2021, the Board of Directors approved a staff recommendation to remove the building due to safety concerns. Following this approval, a group of community members expressed disapproval with the removal of the building. The Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston sent correspondence requesting the Authority reconsider the decision. At the Authority’s November Board of Director’s meeting, the original motion was amended to read:

BD-21-120

Nemcek – Burrell

*“That the following previously adopted motion be amended to now read that the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated July 14, 2021 on the removal/tear down of the Campbell House Museum from the A.W Campbell Conservation Area and that staff be directed to postpone any action relating to the building until May 1, 2022 in order to allow the community to fundraise and for staff to investigate further options and further that any repairs or restorations to the A.W. Campbell House Museum be done so at no cost to the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority.”*

**CARRIED**

**Update:**

- On December 15, 2021, the Authority received correspondence from the Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston that by-law number 17 from 1991 designates the building as being of historical value or interest under the Ontario Heritage Act.
- The local community group interested in saving the building has contracted a roofer to complete repairs and stop weather from infiltrating the building with funds raised. The roofer has visited the site and provided appropriate documentation to proceed with the work. Weather and scheduling has delayed this repair.
- On January 18, 2022, staff attended the “Friends of Campbell Park” Zoom meeting where the immediate and future goals of the group were discussed. The group scheduled their next meeting for February 2<sup>nd</sup> to finalize mission and goals to be provided to the Board of Directors.
- On January 24, 2022, staff had a phone meeting with legal counsel to discuss obligations for a building designated under the Ontario Heritage Act as well as options available to the Authority.
- On February 2, 2022, staff received the “Friends of Campbell Park” Mission and Vision statement.
- On February 9, 2022, Authority staff met on site with building department staff from Lambton County to inspect the building. County staff will provide information on requirements for opening the building to the public and on property standards that would apply to the building.
- The “Friends of Campbell Park” have arranged for a site visit by Thor Dingman (a preservation works consultant) to inspect the building and provide an opinion on the condition of the building and estimates for rehabilitation. This visit will take place in late February or March.

**Next Steps:**

- Receive and review reports from Lambton County and Thor Dingman on the required upgrades
- Estimate costs for different levels of rehabilitation
- Continue discussions with community group
- Determine how different building uses would be categorized under the Conservation Authorities Act (Category 1, 2, or 3) and how funding would be secured

- Evaluate all options for this building
- Provide information to the Board of Directors in a future report with recommendations

The following documents were reviewed:

- Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston that by-law number 17
- Friends of Campbell Park mission and vision statement.

**Financial Impact:**

To date, approximately \$485 has been spent to have a storage bin delivered to site for removal of building contents. Following the amendment to the Board motion, the bin was returned. Contents remain in the building at this time.

**Directors Comments:**

Director Al Broad highlighted that the reasoning for the historical designation of the A.W. Campbell House Museum, made in 1991, was partly due to the deterioration of the building. It was suggested that the Board of Directors enter into an operating agreement with the Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston. Director of Conservation Areas, Greg Wilcox requested that any decisions relating to the A.W. Campbell House Museum be held until more information can be gathered and presented to the Board of Directors.

Questions arose regarding the recent activity on the property, such as the roofing repairs. Mr. Wilcox explained that the area community members have fundraised and received volunteer services to complete this work.

**BD-22-23**

**Nemcek – MacKinnon**

**“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report, dated February 9, 2022 on the status of the Campbell House Museum, and further that staff be directed to postpone any action relating to the building indefinitely until staff investigations are complete, and direction is provided by the Board of Directors.”**

**CARRIED**

This report addresses the following business arising request from the Board of Directors:

*Regarding BD-21-131*

*Request that staff explore whether the initial processing of simple permit applications can be delegated, with only SCRCA staff providing final approval and to report on the possibility of this at the February Annual General Meeting.*

Staff have reviewed this possibility and provide the following information to the Board of Directors:

- As per Ontario Regulation 171/06, subsection 3(3) and 6(3), the executive committee or one or more employees of the Authority that have been designated by the Authority for the purposes of this section, may exercise the powers and duties of the Authority under subsections (1) and (2) with respect to the granting of

permissions for development in or on the areas described in subsection 2(1) O. Reg 83/13, s. 2, or under subsections (1) and (2) with respect to granting permission for alteration. O. Reg. 83/13, s. 4(2).

- Therefore, this role cannot be delegated to the Municipal/County staff;
- SCRCA staff are trained and specialized to review applications made under Ontario Regulation 171/06. There is specialized training offered by Conservation Ontario to CA staff which teaches the legal repercussions around issuing permits;
- “Simple” permits/clearances still require review of SCRCA specific floodplain and erosion hazard, and wetland mapping, flood elevation information, past files, and design details.
- CA staff would still need to review the file (even if the Municipality/County pre-screened the file) as there is liability to the Conservation Authority when issuing permits. Having the Municipalities/Counties review prior to SCRCA staff reviewing would create redundancy, duplication and confusion for the landowner;
- Having the CA review and issue permits maintains consistency across the SCRCA watershed and all 17 member Municipalities, as well as other CAs across the Province and neighbouring CAs;
- The current process with Lambton County is working well.
  - Lambton County screens the property for the landowner to determine if it is regulated;
  - Lambton County notifies the landowner within 48 hours, if the property is regulated by the Conservation Authority;
  - Lambton County emails any submitted documents such as site plans, construction drawings etc. to the CA for review;
  - Lambton County continues to work on the file and issues the final permit once the CA permit is received;
  - CA starts a file and notifies landowner what additional information is required;
  - Going forward into 2022/2023, Lambton County has outlined that they are working on a new software system and digitizing old files that will allow all pertinent documents to be shared with the CA immediately through the software (rather than emailing back and forth), and will allow for a more efficient review process.
- Since early 2020, the SCRCA Planning and Regulations department has lost several experienced members of the team. As we work to re-build the department back up to pre-2020 numbers, there has been an increase in files and applications. With the hiring of the Planning and Regulations Clerk this month, department staffing will be back at pre-2020 levels. As per the recommendations in the Tim Dobbie Consulting Ltd. report, the addition of two permanent full-time staff members will be transitioned in over the next two years, as funding becomes available, to keep up with increased development in the watershed.
- What Municipalities/Counties can do to help out SCRCA to decrease timelines:
  - Screen the property to determine if it is regulated by the Conservation Authority. SCRCA’s regulated area mapping is shared with the

Municipalities and Counties on an annual basis, and is also available at [www.camaps.ca](http://www.camaps.ca);

- Notify landowners as soon as possible that their property is regulated and that they will need a permit and/or clearance from the Conservation Authority;
  - Email any plans including construction drawings received to [planning@scrca.on.ca](mailto:planning@scrca.on.ca)
  - Direct landowners to fill out an application form, found on our website: <https://www.scrca.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/FORMR1-SCRCA-Application-Form1.pdf>
  - Pages 3 and 4 of the application outline general requirements that should be submitted with the application form.
- In the coming year, SCRCA will be preparing and implementing Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) agreements with the Municipalities and Counties for all planning and regulations services. These agreements will ensure that appropriate expectations, roles and timelines are addressed.

#### **BD-22-24**

**Burrell – Miller**

**“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report, dated February 10, 2022 in response to the item of business arising regarding the SCRCA Planning and Regulations permitting process and the possibility of County/Municipal involvement.”**

**CARRIED**

At the November 4, 2021 Board of Director meeting, a request was made of staff to provide an analysis of the current fee schedule and determine what is required for the organization to recoup 100% of the costs associated with work carried out under Section 28 of the Conservation Authorities Act (CA Act), and in providing technical review and clearance services for planning, infrastructure, and other development related activities.

In keeping with the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry’s (MNRF’s) guidelines for the collection of fees under Section 21 of the CA Act, the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) collects user fees for regulatory permits and plan review services, including responses to real estate and public inquiries.

In 2021, SCRCA staff provided the Board of Directors with an updated fee structure for 2022 to offset the costs of hiring additional program staff that were recommended in the Tim Dobbie Consulting report. The report recommended the hiring of an additional 3 staff to increase the capacity of the Planning and Regulation Department. The Board of Directors approved a recommendation to increase staffing over a two-year period, 2022 and 2023, as well as approved increases to the general levy and the 2022 Fee Schedule. As a result, fees were increased between 10% and 20% depending on the category.

The Board of Directors subsequently requested that staff examine the possibility of collecting fees associated with the Planning and Regulations programs that would see the SCRCA collect 100% of the cost of operations associated with planning and regulations activities. The goal would be to target ‘development paying for development’ (‘user pay principle’) in keeping with industry standards.

In preparation of the report, SCRCA staff compared fee schedules with local conservation authorities (Lower Thames, Essex, Ausable-Bayfield, Upper Thames, and Kettle) as well as two from conservation authorities that had recently undertaken fee reviews (Sudbury-Nickel and Credit Valley). Staff also reviewed a September 19, 2019 report that was provided to the Board of Directors that included an examination of SCRCA fees for 2020 and the ability of the SCRCA to achieve a 60/40 cost recovery model. For clarity, the 60/40 cost recovery model (60% fee generated, 40% levy supported costs) is widely acknowledged as the maximum amount any conservation authority can achieve without compromising public willingness to seek out permits. All of the conservation authorities in major development areas (Toronto and Region, Credit, Central Lake Ontario and Halton) have implemented the 60/40 model. UTRCA and Sudbury adopted a 50/50 model.

The report submitted to the SCRCA Board of Directors in 2019 noted that:

*Looking at cost recovery models...and taking one example (for example the 60/40 user fee to levy and provincial grant ratio model), and taking 2020 Planning and Regulations Budget projections, user fee revenue would need to be increased by over 60% in order to achieve the 60% user fee cost recovery model for 2020....While a 10% increase in fees this year will not achieve long-term goals for a specific cost recovery model goal in 2020, SCRCA staff feel that at this time it is the maximum increase acceptable to consider to remain consistent with the current fee policy above, and to ensure continued progress to work towards a cost recovery plan. Looking at the numbers, one option to achieve a cost recovery model (for example 60/40) could be to continue to phase fee increases over a 6-year period with 10% increase each year.*

Fees have been increased accordingly in 2019, 2020 and 2021. An additional increase was added for 2022 in order to reduce impact on the general levy.

**Current Situation:**

In the past 3 years the SCRCA has seen an increase in applications and revenue generation.

Year*	Number of Fees Collected	Total Fees Collected
2019	753	\$232,677
2020	803	\$236,929
2021	896	\$250,450

\*A 3-year outlook is provided as the SCRCA updated its tracking system to provide better accuracy in 2019



What is notable is that the while number of applications is steadily increasing, and fees have been increased, there has not been a significant corresponding increase in revenue. The reason for this can be found when examining the 2021 applications for which the SCRCA collected a fee.

In 2021, the SCRCA collected fees totalling \$250,450 from 896 submissions for work under Section 28 of the CA Act and in providing technical review and clearance services for planning, infrastructure and other development related activities.

<b>Type of Submission</b>	<b>Number of Fees Collected</b>	<b>Percentage of Fee Type</b>	<b>Total Fees Collected</b>	<b>Percentage of Fees</b>
Processing Fees	345	38.51%	\$41,630	16.62%
Permits	285	31.81%	\$112,790	45.03%
Drains/DART	90	10.05%	\$33,205	13.26%
Legal/Property Inquiries	84	9.38%	\$17,480	6.98%
Planning (Hazard)	53	5.92%	\$14,975	5.98%
Planning (Natural Heritage)	22	2.46%	\$25,300	10.10%
Planning (Inquiry)	16	1.79%	\$4,300	0.02%
Environmental Assessment	1	0.01%	\$370	0.002%

As shown, the bulk of the work currently conducted by Planning and Regulations staff is concentrated in Permitting. The fees for the services are minor, most falling in the \$120-\$215 range. When taking into consideration fees, affordability for the applicant must be accounted for and the aforementioned range was deemed to be reasonable. If the fees become too onerous, many will forgo the application process and potentially undertake work in contravention of the CA Act. This in turn leads to an increase in enforcement activity (fees cannot be charged for investigations) and legal costs which are rarely recouped by the organization. For reference, staff investigated 27 potential permitting violations in 2021.

In a fee comparison with other CAs, what must be remembered is that each CA is reflective of the area and conditions where it is based. Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) fees are provided to demonstrate the scale at which fees must be set in order to achieve a 60% cost recovery in an intense development environment. The CVC is a high growth area in comparison with SCRCA. Conversely, Kettle Creek Conservation Authority (KCCA), has far fewer resources and pressures than the SCRCA and its fee schedule is reflective of that. A chart showing the various fee category for each CA has been provided. Fees for Lambton County were also provided for applicable categories.

A select number of fee categories have been broken out for comparison. These fee categories are the most prevalent in SCRCA staff workflow. 2022 fees compare as follows:

Fee Category	SCRCA Fees	Average of Comparator CA Fees	% Of Average Fee
Processing Fees	\$140	\$180	77.8%
Routine Permits	\$240	\$179.70	133%
Small Scale Permit	\$470	\$470	100%
Medium Scale Permit	\$730	\$938	77.8%
Large Scale Permit	\$1,235	\$1,590.42 (w/o CVC) \$4,496 (with CVC)	77.6% 27.5%
Legal Inquiries	\$220	\$205	107%
Minor Drainage	\$65	\$152.50	42.6%
Standard Drainage	\$380	\$645	58.9%
Major Drainage	\$1,010	\$1,030	98%
Minor Variance Heritage	\$365	\$403	90.5%
Minor Variance Hazard	\$220	\$294	74.8%

As shown above, the fees currently charged by the SCRCA vary greatly from the comparator CA average depending on type. The SCRCA can make increases in some areas and this was acknowledged in the 2019 Staff Report and fee increase strategy.

#### Cost Recovery Scenarios:

In 2022, the budget for the Planning and Regulations is approved at \$833,009 with a supporting levy of \$494,576 and a provincial transfer of \$19,000. The remaining \$319,433 is to be provided through fees. Therefore, in 2022, the SCRCA is budgeted to recover 38% of its costs. The Board of Directors requested that staff examine fees that would accomplish 100%, 75%, 60% and 50% cost recovery for Planning and Regulations. Based on the approved 2022 budget, the SCRCA would need to increase fees by the following amounts:

- 100% Cost Recovery - Increase 2022 Fees by 261%
- 75% Cost Recovery - Increase 2022 Fees by 196%
- 60% Cost Recovery - Increase 2022 Fees by 156%
- 50% Cost Recovery - Increase 2022 Fees by 130%

To illustrate what these increases would translate to in specific fees, please see the chart below. (CR refers to Cost Recovery)

Fee Category	2022 Fee	100% CR	75% CR	60% CR	50% CR
Processing Fee	\$140	\$365.40	\$274.40	\$218.40	\$182
Routine Permits	\$240	\$626.40	\$470.40	\$374.40	\$312
Small Scale Permit	\$470	\$1,226.70	\$921.20	\$733.20	\$611
Medium Scale Permit	\$730	\$1,905.30	\$1,430.80	\$1,138.80	\$949
Legal Inquiries	\$220	\$574.20	\$431.20	\$343.20	\$286
Minor Drainage	\$65	\$169.65	\$127.40	\$101.40	\$84.50
Standard Drainage	\$380	\$991.80	\$744.80	\$592.80	\$494
Major Drainage	\$1,010	\$2,636.10	\$1,979.60	\$1,575.60	\$1,313

Minor Variance Heritage	\$365	\$952.65	\$715.40	\$569.40	\$474.50
Minor Variance Hazard	\$220	\$574.20	\$431.20	\$343.20	\$286

**Future Oppourtunities:**

For the 2023 fee schedule, staff propose the following recommendations for consideration:

- For fees that are refunded, retain a 20% administration cost.
- In negotiating the MOUs with municipal partners, SCRCA needs to discuss potential for fees for submissions beyond those accommodated in the general levy.
- Examine more fully the possibility of GIS services being utilized as a fee service.
- Beginning in 2023, institute a minimum inflationary or COLA increase annually. This will help to keep fees from becoming stagnant and falling behind operation costs.

Focus on getting the SCRCA fees up to a minimum 50/50 formula by 2026.

**Directors Comments:**

Directors requested and received clarification on the difference between the various types of permit applications and the justifications for the level of cost each incurs. General Manager, Ken Phillips confirmed that the recommendation from staff is to make a gradual move toward a 50% fee/50% levy cost recovery by 2026. Chair Mike Stark informed the board that he intends to bring this matter to a future Executive Committee for discussion and formal recommendation to the full board.

**BD-22-25**

**Kennes – Brown**

**“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated February 16, 2022 and further directs staff to carry out the recommendations listed within the report to assist with cost recovery efforts for Planning and Regulations operations.”**

**CARRIED**

- 2022-2023 Projects will be submitted on February 11, 2022
- All applications will be reviewed by a committee, made up of Provincial and Conservation Authority staff representatives, in late March or early April, and will be ranked in comparison to all submitted projects from across the Province
- If funding is confirmed for this program, a list of approved projects may be available in May, 2022
- A list of WECl projects submitted for 2022-2023 is outlined below

Structure	Project Name	Description of Work	Total Project Cost (\$)	Grant Requested (\$)
Sarnia Shoreline Protection	Shoreline Repair (Pine St to Penhuron Avenue)	Carry out construction of shoreline protection as per the design	\$600,000	\$300,000
Port Lambton Park	Port Lambton Park Shoreline Restoration	Construction of Shoreline restoration at Port Lambton Park	\$400,000	\$200,000
W. Darcy McKeough Dam	Dam Instrumentation	Implement real time structural health monitoring instrumentation at the McKeough Dam.	\$30,000	\$15,000
W. Darcy McKeough Floodway	Channel floor repair	Perform Channel repairs on the McKeough Floodway as identified in the Engineering reports.	\$40,000	\$20,000

**BD-22-26**

**Burrell – Kennes**

**“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated February 8, 2022 on Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Projects and approves the projects submitted for funding in 2022-2023 and further will assist staff in obtaining matching funds, where required, to support these projects upon confirmation of funding approval.”**

**CARRIED**

**Under New Business**

General Manager, Ken Phillips addressed the recently shared correspondence from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) regarding the addition of an agricultural sector representative to Ontario Conservation Authority Boards. A recent meeting with Conservation Ontario and MECP was held for further clarification and it was explained that the Minister *may, (not shall)* appoint an agricultural representative, which implies that an exception may be considered. It was explained that the per diem rate for the agricultural representative is paid by the MECP and is in line with other Ministry-appointed committees. A request has been made to review the potential candidates prior to confirmation of appointment, if possible. Directors discussed and agreed that the current SCRCA Board membership is well represented by the agricultural sector, as it has been historically.

**BD-22-27**

**Mariott – Miller**

**“That correspondence be drafted to inform the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks that there is adequate representation of the agricultural sector on the current membership of the Board of Directors, and further request that this be considered in the decision whether to appoint an additional board member.”**

**CARRIED**

**New Business (Continued)**

Director Brad Loosley brought forth concerns regarding the timelines for the approval of planning applications and enquired whether a policy on this matter exists. General Manager, Ken Phillips and Director of Planning and Regulations, Melissa Deisley informed that staff are working to reduce timelines and meet compliance with the Conservation Ontario standards for acceptable turnaround times, which will be brought to a future meeting for information. Staff report that the most common cause of delays in processing are caused by incomplete applications. It was also noted that the Planning and Regulations department staff will be at full complement in the following week, and this will help to alleviate workloads and increase customer service satisfaction. Director Brad Loosley expressed that his concern also relates to complete applications and the timeline between completion of processing and the physical receipt of the permit by the applicant.

Directors also discussed the potential for the return to in-person meetings and the possibility of offering a hybrid model and/or transition plan. Chair, Mike Stark requested that directors report any apprehensions or concerns they may have regarding a return to in-person meetings to General Manager, Ken Phillips or Board Coordinator, Ashley Fletcher.

**BD-22-28**

**Marriott - Miller**


**“That the meeting be adjourned.”**

**CARRIED**



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**Mike Stark**  
Chair



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**Ken Phillips**  
General Manager