

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Date: November 10, 2022 Time: 10:00 a.m.

Warwick Community Centre – 7074 Egremont Rd, Watford

Directors Present: John Brennan, Diane Brewer, Vice Chair Pat Brown, Terry Burrell, Bill Dennis, Joe Faas, Greg Grimes, Aaron Hall, Frank Kennes, Brad Loosley, Betty Ann MacKinnon, Kevin Marriott, Steve Miller, Frank Nemcek, Chair Mike Stark, Tim Wilkins

Directors Present (Remote): Al Broad, Emery Huszka

Regrets: Debbie Heffernan, Lorie Scott, Jerry Westgate

Staff Present: Donna Blue, Manager of Communications; Melissa Deisley, Director of Planning and Resources; Chris Durand, Manager of IT/GIS; Ashley Fletcher, Administrative Assistant/ Board Coordinator; Kate Jamieson, Payroll/Accounting Clerk; Chunning Li, Director of Corporate Services; Tim Payne, Manager of Forestry; Ken Phillips, General Manager; Kelli Smith, Conservation Lands Specialist; Shane White, Maintenance Foreman, McKeough Dam; Greg Wilcox, Manager of Conservation Areas

Guests Present: Ben Arnold, Nancy De Moor, Phil De Moor, Mark Hay, MaryAnn Hay

The Chair welcomed Directors, staff and guests to the meeting and 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. The Chair acknowledged all of the candidates who ran for municipal council and congratulated those who were elected.

BD-22-95

Loosley – Burrell

"That the Board of Directors accepts the agenda for the meeting as presented."

CARRIED

The minutes of the Board of Directors meeting, held September 15, 2022, were reviewed.

BD-22-96

Miller - Nemcek

"That the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting, held September 15, 2022, be approved as distributed."

CARRIED

The minutes of the Conservation Ontario Council meeting, held on September 26, 2022, were reviewed.

BD-22-97

Kennes - Burrell

"That the Board of Directors acknowledge the minutes of the Conservation Ontario Council meeting, held remotely on September 26, 2022."

CARRIED

Correspondence from Mr. Ben Arnold, regarding his request to extend the term of his agricultural leases, was reviewed. A presentation was also provided by Mr. Arnold, elaborating on this request.

Director's Comments:

Clarifying questions were brought forth from directors following the presentation. Concerns were raised regarding the fairness of extending the lease and considerations for inflation over the proposed extension period.

BD-22-98

Brennan - Huszka

"That the Board of Directors acknowledge the presentation from Mr. Ben Arnold regarding the proposed improvements to SCRCA agricultural land, and the request for an extension of the lease for lands, for which he is a tenant."

CARRIED

A presentation was provided by Manager of Forestry, Tim Payne.

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) currently rents our 1,201.5 acres of agriculture land on 30 parcels, providing revenue to offset the cost of land ownership. It is well known in the area that the SCRCA agriculture lands are in fair to poor condition when it comes to soil health and farm practices, and staff are continually seeking to identify areas and implementations for improvement. To date, SCRCA agricultural lands have not received the attention required to improve their performance and value, and this is partially due to the tender process and the lack of conditions within the agreements. During the last tendering of the agriculture lands, staff implemented new lease agreements with conditions such as the expectation to establish and/or retain of buffers. While the tender process is fair in practice, there are some disadvantages to this process. Namely, it is difficult to implement some best farm practices when the agreements are limited to 5 years. A tenant may be hesitant to provide any additional inputs into the land, as the benefits will not be seen immediately.

BD-20-79

Burrell - Marriott

"That the Board of Directors accepts the report dated September 1, 2020 on the McKeough lands and supports that non asset items be disposed of as part of the

routine maintenance of the land and further directs staff to remove all clauses within the land lease agreements giving the first right of refusal and the right to match highest bids to current tenants while also maintaining the right to refuse the highest bid for any reason.

CARRIED

As a non-government organization which provides funding to landowners to promote better farm practices, we should be developing a way to establish those practices on our land.

One of our tenants, Mr. Ben Arnold, currently leases 13 properties totalling 607.43 acres. Mr. Arnold has approached staff regarding ways to implement better farm practices. He has completed soil surveys and has consulted with an agronomist to increase soil health, which will require inputs to the soil. Mr. Arnold is willing to work with the SCRCA in making improvements to the land, however to make investments and realize their benefits, he will require an extension of the land lease.

Staff recognize this as a positive oppourtunity to partner with the tenant, providing benefits such as base line information on the land, monitoring of the results and documentation of improvements to soil health and yield, based on the science and inputs.

Strategic Objectives(s):

Goal 2 – Protect, manage, and restore our natural systems including woodlands, wetlands, waterways, and lakes

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.

Financial Impact:

None

Director's Comments:

Directors expressed concern regarding the oppourtunity cost in forgoing the tender process, as considerations for inflation have not been made and may not be predicted for

the extended term of 10 years. Directors have requested that staff consider alternative (shorter) term extensions and the addition of clauses within future land leases addressing soil quality and fertility standards and expectations. A report including the following is requested for review at the December, 2022 Board of Directors meeting:

- The annual dollar amount currently received by SCRCA for agricultural land rentals
- The percentage of total revenue represented by agricultural land rent
- Financial impact of various scenarios (lease extension terms and rates of inflation)
- Suggested modifications to agricultural lease extensions, entertaining the above concerns.

BD-22-99

Burrell - Brennan

"That the Board of Directors acknowledge the report, dated October 14, 2022 on the McKeough Upstream Lands Agricultural Lease Agreements and further approve two 5-year extensions of the lease agreement for 13 properties currently rented to Mr. Ben Arnold until December 31, 2035, as recommended within the report."

TABLED

Correspondence from Mr. Phil De Moor and Mr. Mark Hay, regarding safety concerns related to hunting on SCRCA property numbers 41 and 56, was reviewed. A presentation was also provided by Mrs. Nancy De Moor, Mr. Phil De Moor and Mr. Mark Hay, elaborating further.

Director's Comments:

Clarifying questions were brought forth by the Board of Directors. It was noted that property line markers are present on the De Moor and Hay property sides, with 'No Trespassing' signage on the SCRCA property. The adjoining landowners confirmed that local OPP have been involved in several circumstances concerning gun safety.

BD-22-100

Kennes – Brewer

"That the Board of Directors acknowledge the presentation from Mr. Phil DeMoor, Mrs. and Mr. Mark Hay regarding hunting on SCRCA property."

CARRIED

Hunting Program:

- When the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) first acquired the McKeough Floodway properties, lands were treated as Conservation Areas and were closed to hunting.
- In April 1983, Lambton Rural Game Association passed a resolution requesting that SCRCA permit hunting on the lands purchased for the W. Darcy McKeough project, as these lands had been traditionally used for hunting.
 - o The Authority concurred with the following resolution:

EC-83-188

"That the Executive Committee approves the recommendation of the Water Control Advisory Board that selected Authority owned lands acquired for the W. Darcy McKeough Floodway project, north of Concession 11 of Sombra Township be open for hunting."

CARRIED

- 1984-1985 season, 261 hunters requested permission to hunt on designated lands.
 The Authority administered the program, with enforcement through Ontario Ministry of
 Natural Resources and Forestry (OMNRF) Conservation Officers and Ontario
 Provincial Police (OPP). There was no cost to obtain a permit and hunters were
 required to file a hunting report at end of season.
- 1988-1989 season, a \$10.00 fee was charged and 54 hunters registered to hunt. The Authority administered the program, with enforcement through OMNRF, Conservation Officers and OPP. Hunters were required to file report at end of the hunting season.
- In 1997 the Farmers and Friends Conservation Club made a proposal to take over the administration of the hunting program and on Aug 5, 1998, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between the Farmers and Friends Conservation Club and the SCRCA.
- In 2013 SCRCA terminated the agreement with the Farmers and Friends Conservation Club and began administering the hunting program internally.
- For the 2022-2023 season, a \$70.00 fee was charged, 118 hunters registered to hunt on designated lands, the Authority administers the program with enforcement by Federal and Provincial Conservation Officers and OPP. The requirement to file an end-of-season report continued.
- CA staff review and revise the hunting program documents annually to reflect changes to the Ontario Hunting Regulations and the Migratory Bird Act to address any potential issues, all with safety being a key factor.
- Applicants who apply to for permission to hunt on the St Clair Region Conservation Authority lands, where hunting is permitted, must provide proof of membership, in good standing, with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (which comes with \$5 million excess Member's Personal Public Liability Insurance).
- In order to obtain an Ontario Hunting License, a hunter must have an Outdoors Card, proof that the hunter has taken a hunter safety course that is on file with the Fish and Wildlife Licensing Service as well as a federal firearms accreditation. If hunting with a gun, hunters must have all required licenses and tags for the game they wish to hunt.
- The Ontario Hunter Education Course teaches new hunters about hunting laws and regulations, hunter responsibilities, wildlife management, hunting safety and equipment, hunting techniques, and wildlife identification.
- The federal firearms accreditation course teaches firearms owners about firearms safety practices, ammunition types and storage, operating firearm actions, safe handling and carry procedures, responsibilities of the firearms owner/user, safe storage, display, transportation, and handling of firearms.
- In the last 20 years, staff have responded to a small number of issues on SCRCA lands where hunting is permitted. All occurrences were related to hunters trespassing to hunt. OMNRF Conservation Officers were contacted and all parties were charged

- and prosecuted.
- In the last 20 years staff have also met with several adjoining landowners to address issues, which included stolen hunting equipment, trespassing, and driving off-road equipment on their lands.
- All violators that were identified were not hunters permitted to hunt on SCRCA lands.
 Staff suggested that the landowners should contact the OMNRF Conservation Officers
 and or the OPP to address these enforcement issues as well as contact law
 enforcement officers if the landowner has any further issues. It was also suggested
 that the landowner may wish to install no hunting signs or take other proactive actions
 to stop unwanted issues.
- Staff have suggested to landowners, who do not feel safe, to be proactive and wear hunter orange clothing, headwear and possibly bells to alert hunters that other people are in the area.
- All of the issues brought to the attention of SCRCA staff were enforcement related and under the jurisdiction of the OMNRF or the OPP and not the SCRCA.
- The hunting program provides individuals with a place to hunt in an area where obtaining permission to hunt is difficult. With permitted hunters on conservation lands, it helps minimize illegal hunting activities.
- Staff recommend the hunting program continue in its current state and continue to document, corroborate and investigate any issues moving forward to determine if permitted hunters are causing issues or if the issues are non-permitted hunters trespassing to hunt. A review of the current fee should be discussed.

The SCRCA hunting permit application as well as a map of the McKeough upstream properties, outlining areas where hunting is permitted and not permitted, was reviewed.

Director's Comments:

It was clarified for Directors that SCRCA hunting permits may only be issued to registered members of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters in good standing, which requires the successful completion of the Ontario Hunter Education Program. In addition to agreeing to SCRCA hunting regulations, outlined within the annual permit application, hunters are held to both Provincial and Federal hunting regulations. Directors request that staff explore additional measures that can be taken to ensure public safety on hunting grounds and adjoining properties such as clear property marking, and signage. A follow up report is requested, outlining such changes, as well as the implications to the overall SCRCA hunting program if the property in question were to be eliminated as a permitted hunting property. Vice Chair Pat Brown suggested that it would be prudent to send notices to all SCRCA hunting permit holders regarding the safety concerns brought forth.

Director Brad Loosley expressed his opinion that SCRCA should not permit hunting on any conservation lands.

Director Terry Burrell requested an amendment to the original motion, requesting a report from staff on the potential elimination of property number 40 from the SCRCA list of

approved hunting areas. The amendment was seconded by Director John Brennan. Director Emery Huszka expressed opposition of the amended motion.

BD-22-101

Burrell – Kennes

"That the Board of Directors acknowledge the report, dated October 20, 2022 regarding Hunting on McKeough Upstream Lands and further that a report be brought forth to the December 8, 2022 Board of Directors meeting providing staff input on the consideration to eliminate hunting zone 40 from the SCRCA hunting program."

CARRIED

Presentation from Craig

BD-22-102

Faas - Grimes

"That the Board of Directors acknowledge the presentation from Craig Paterson, Acting Manager of Biology, providing an overview of the biology department." CARRIED

A verbal update was provided by General Manager Ken Phillips on Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* and the potential changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, which appear to evolve daily. Conservation Ontario has issued a response to the Provincial government outlining concerns, as well as a draft letter for Conservation Authorities, to be endorsed by the Board of Directors and forwarded to local and provincial government. SCRCA will be requesting that member municipalities consider submitting their own letters of opposing Bill 23. The deadline to submit comments to the Standing Committee is November 17, 2022.

The Conservation Ontario Council meets on Tuesday, November 15.

Operations

- The SCRCA service delivery standards have been delayed as a result of Bill 23
 More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022, that will alter timelines and deliverables. The
 General Manager and the Director of Planning and Regulations will be attending a
 Conservation Ontario session on November 9, 2022 to gain more insight into the
 proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and resulting service
 delivery standards.
- Staff conducted public open house sessions on the 2023-2038 Strategic Plan in Petrolia, Dresden, Forest and Sarnia during the week of October 24-28, 2022. A final session takes place in Strathroy on November 3, 2022 at the SCRCA Administrative Office.

Community/Partnership Outreach

- The General Manager attended two meetings of the Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce (SLCC) Green Committee. The SCRCA will be working with the SLCC in the future to provide education and outreach sessions for members.
- A meeting was held with staff from the University of Guelph Campus at Ridgetown to discuss potential opportunities for partnering on various projects and initiatives.

Federal/Provincial/Municipal Meetings

- The General Manager has attended several meetings with regard to the changes
 of the Conservation Authorities act under the proposed Bill 23. The Board of
 Directors will be given a formal report at the next Board of Directors meeting.
- The General Manager attended the Ontario Trillium Fund recognition event at Wawanosh Wetlands Conservation Area. Member of Provincial Parliament, Bob Bailey; Chair, Mike Stark and Vice-Chair, Pat Brown were also in attendance.

BD-22-103

Loosley - Miller

"That the Board of Directors acknowledges the General Manager's report, dated November 1, 2022."

CARRIED

A verbal report was provided by General Manager, Ken Phillips on the updated COVID-19 Safe Working Procedures. Staff continue to follow provincial health guidelines and masks are now optional in the office. Amendments to the Administrative By-Laws, providing permanent allowance for hybrid virtual meetings, are forthcoming.

BD-22-104

Burrell - Brennan

"That the Board of Directors acknowledges the verbal report on the updated COVID-19 Safe Working Procedures."

CARRIED

Director Terry Burrell reported a conflict of Interest due to an immediate family member employed by the Authority.

The ongoing pandemic has had an effect on the concept of the workplace and how it is constructed. During the height of preventative measures, the SCRCA and most business transitioned from a brick and mortar office setting to that of a virtual one. The SCRCA adapted quickly to this environment and created the infrastructure that permitted staff to work remotely, remain connected and keep complete their day-to-day tasks.

As the SCRCA has progressed out of the pandemic health measures and had staff return to the office, there has been a request to consider adopting a hybrid work arrangement

that would allow eligible staff to work remotely for a portion of the work week. Neighbouring conservation authorities have adapted such strategies and are using it as a tool in recruitment. Recent staff departures from the SCRCA have sited an opportunity to work remotely as a factor in their decision to leave the organization. Recent interviews with prospective job candidates have further highlighted the need to adopt a hybrid work arrangement in order to recruit and retain staff going forward.

SCRCA staff have reviewed policies from several conservation authorities and Lambton County in an effort to develop a policy that will best serve the staff and the organization's needs and tasks. The policy suggests a work week that affords staff the chance to work remotely for 2 days a week and be required to be in the office for the remaining 3 days, if eligible. It is hoped that the adoption of the policy will assist with staff retention and recruitment.

Strategic Objectives(s):

Goal 4: Build a Stronger and More Valued Workplace Through Business Excellence.

Financial Impact:

None.

BD-22-105

Brown - Kennes

"That the Board of Directors acknowledges the report dated October 28, 2022 on the Hybrid Work Arrangement Policy, adopts the policy as presented and further directs staff to update all applicable manuals and procedures to include the policy."

CARRIED

The structural engineer's report on the A.W. Campbell house was reviewed.

Director's Comments:

Director Frank Nemcek requested that the Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston and the Friends of Campbell Park community group be given time to review the engineer's report. Directors Al Broad and Emery Huszka opposed the tabling, due to the informational nature of the motion.

BD-22-106

Nemcek - Burrell

"That the Board of Directors receives for information the report, dated October 21, 2022 on the A.W. Campbell House Structural Engineer's Report and direct staff to provide the report to the Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston for their review."

TABLED

BD-22-107

Loosley - Hall

"That the 2023 Nominating Committee consisting of the following four directors representing the four districts of the Authority being Sarnia, Lambton, Chatham-Kent, and Middlesex be: Terry Burrell, Tim Wilkins, Aaron Hall and Betty Ann MacKinnon and further that the Nominating Committee's recommendation for the 2023 committee membership be presented at the Annual General Meeting."

CARRIED

The 2023 tentative schedule of meetings was reviewed.

BD-22-108

Kennes – Burrell

"That the Board of Directors approves the 2023 tentative schedule of meetings for the Board of Directors and Committees, dated September 21, 2022." CARRIED

The Chair called for a recess of the meeting at 12:07 p.m and was brought to order at 12:45 p.m.

The preliminary draft budget for 2023 was reviewed. General Manager, Ken Phillips will be extending an offer to present to councils on the 2023 draft budget prior to a vote taking place in February or March of 2023, when new appointments to the Board of Directors commence.

Director Emery Huszka declared non vote to vote due to the terms of his appointment as agricultural sector representative.

The SCRCA management team have completed a draft of the 2023 Budget, and plan to circulate 2023 Draft Budget Booklet to member municipalities for review. The booklet includes supporting schedules and appendix:

- **Schedule A** Total Municipal Funding including Special Infrastructure Project. 2023 Total Municipal Funding (draft) is \$3,286,200. This includes General Levy of \$1,549,010, Special Levy of \$187,190, and Water Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) & Disaster Mitigation Adaptation Fund (DMAF) project funding of \$1,550,000.
- **Schedule B** Draft General Levy Assessment for member municipalities. It is anticipated that the General Levy for 2023 will be \$1,549,011, an increase of \$170,497 or 12.4% increase from 2022 general levy.
- Schedule C Proposed General Levy per \$100K Assessment Value. The average 2023 Proposed General Levy per \$100K Assessment Value is \$4.89, an increase of \$0.49 from 2022.

- **Schedule D** Conservation Area Maintenance and Operation Budget (draft). Total Conservation Area Budget (draft) is \$1,513,969, \$1,471,290 out of which is from self-generating revenue.
- Schedule E % Breakdown of costs in General Levy Departments
- 2023 Budget (Draft) Summary This explains funding sources for different operations and programs in the 2023 draft budget, and the percentage of each funding source in the total budget.
- Appendix Detailed Department Draft Budgets for Departments that are covered by General Levy and would be considered "Core/Mandatory" activities, or would directly support the "Core/Mandatory" activities.

The key budget pressures in this Draft 2023 Budget are:

- Insurance cost increase \$29,000. Liability and Risk Insurance cost increased by 34% in 2022. It is anticipated it will continue to increase in 2023.
- Wage movements including step and Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) \$74,346.
- Potential increase in Ontario Municipal Employee Retirement System (OMERS) costs \$18,019. Effective January 1, 2023, non full-time employees may elect to join OMERS plan.
- Conservation Ontario Levy increase \$9,634.
- 1.5 FTE staff for Planning and Regulations \$137,851, as per recommendation from Tim Dobbie Consultants Ltd. Report.
- Consulting fee for new phone system and server upgrade \$10,000. The SCRCA
 has been informed by our carrier that our existing phone system will not be
 supported beyond 2023.

Revenues that help to reduce the costs to municipalities are: Project administration fees, Internal charges to revenue producing activities, Grant funding, and Program Fees increase, including Planning & Regulation Fees increase. These result in a 12.4% increase in General Levy or \$170,497, and the primary drivers are:

- 10% increase directed to 1.5 FTE staff for Planning and Regulations (\$137, 851)
- 1.6% increase directed to general liability insurance premiums increase (\$22,000)
- 0.7% increase directed to consulting fee for new phone system and server upgrade for Administrative Office (\$10,000)

Moving forward with the 2024 Budget, changes will occur based on revisions to the Conservation Authorities Act:

 The 2024 budget will move to create a minimum levy to directly support and share direct Board costs across municipalities based on representation. Several CAs are already doing this and the remainder will be moving to this model. These direct Board costs will include total honorarium costs, travel costs, meeting expenses, and service awards.

- Further delineation of the SCRCA budget to reflect CA Act changes between mandatory (Category 1 programs) and non-mandatory (Category 2 and 3 programs) as these become clearer.
- In addition, with planned implementation of the AMP in 2023, we should be able to provide an analysis of the current state of assets and planned capital budgeting starting in 2024.

BD-22-109

Wilkins – Brennan

"That the Board of Directors table the 2023 preliminary draft budget of \$9,046,878 with a proposed municipal general levy of \$1,549,011, and refrain from circulating to member municipalities for information and input until 2024."

DEFEATED

BD-22-110

Burrell - Kennes

"That the Board of Directors acknowledges the 2023 preliminary draft budget of \$9,046,878 with a proposed municipal general levy of \$1,549,011, to be circulated to member municipalities for information and input based on our budget review process."

CARRIED

Conservation Authorities (CAs) regulate activities that change, divert, or interfere in any way with the existing channel of a river, creek, stream or watercourse, or that interfere with wetlands. Municipal drains are generally watercourses, as defined under the CA Act and are therefore regulated by CAs. Staff are circulated on all projects completed under sections 74, 76, 78 or section 4 of the Drainage Act. Staff help member municipalities meet regulatory requirements by issuing Standard Compliance Requirements (SCRs) as per the Drainage Act and Conservation Authorities Act (DART) Protocol for maintenance projects (Drainage Act, S.74) and permits under Ontario Regulation 171/06 for projects where DART does not apply (Drainage Act, S. 4: Petition Drains and S. 78: Improvements).

Petition Drains and Improvements often require the appointment of an engineer to examine the area requiring drainage and prepare a report. These reports include the history of the drain and drainage issues, document current concerns and provide recommendations, designs (plan, profile, and specifications), and estimate of costs, assessment, and allowances for a completed project.

SCRCA review of these reports starts at the initial on-site meeting notice where an Engineer has been appointed by council and schedules a meeting with the affected landowners to review the request and investigate any other concerns. SCRCA staff screen the location of the project to determine any initial concerns with the location and scope of work and will attend the on-site meeting. Following the on-site meeting the scope of work has often been confirmed and any further comments or concerns from the

SCRCA are discussed/provided at that time. By involving SCRCA staff early in the process, any concerns can be addressed at an early stage which reduces the number of delays later in the process.

In some instances, an additional site visit may be required to walk the drain to better understand the regulated features or project scope. Staff will often meet with the Drainage Superintendent and Engineer during these meetings and others may be included (i.e. landowner, DFO staff etc.). The Engineer may provide a preliminary report for review, often this report is reviewed by the affected landowners and SCRCA staff participate as well and provide comment.

Once the final report is submitted, SCRCA staff will review once more to ensure all comments have been addressed, review any changes to the design and ensure the design will not have any upstream or downstream impacts to flooding and erosion and that it meets the requirements under O. Reg. 171/06. Finally, a permit will be prepared and issued which includes specific conditions for the proposed work. See the table below for an average breakdown of time spent in review.

Activity	Timing	
Screening	1 hour	
On-site meeting	Approximately 1 hour meeting	
Additional site visits	1-2 hours	
Drive time to site visits and meetings	Max 2 hours/meeting	
Preliminary Report Review not only one	3 hours	
providing feedback need to review final		
report as well.		
Report review	2-3 hours *3-5 hours if no preliminary	
	report provided*	
Correspondence/meetings	2-3 hours	
Permit writing and issuing	2 hours	
Total Hours	16 hours	

^{*}The extent of review varies by project, the hours listed above is an average estimate of time spent, some projects may require more or less review time and resources.

DART review includes any maintenance projects under the Drainage Act and Conservation Authorities Act Review Protocol which can be provided with a Standard Compliance Requirements letter. The SCRCA is proposing to lower these fees/keep them the same to stay in line with adjacent Conservation Authorities, and to reflect the reduced staff time that is required to review these files.

The Engineer's Report Review fee is applied for projects under Section 4 or 78 of the Drainage Act which require more in-depth review of the reports by SCRCA staff, site visit(s), and issuance of the permit as outlined above. The proposed fee for 2022 is \$570.00 which is an increase of \$60 from 2021. These fees are invoiced to the

Municipality to be incorporated into the cost assessment to the landowners as part of the project.

Drain Enclosures and Drain Re-alignments are charged under the Minor Permit B category if they can be supported at staff level, and are charged a greater fee if they cannot be supported and are appealed to a Hearing before the Board of Directors. These proposals require the most review from SCRCA staff and staff try to work with the Municipal Drainage Superintendents and landowners to achieve a resolution that can be supported at staff level without a hearing before the Board (i.e. reduced length, net environmental benefits, no enclosure, etc.).

BD-22-111

Faas – MacKinnon

"That the Board of Directs acknowledge for information the report dated October 13, 2022 on the review and analysis of the staff time and associated costs to complete review of an engineer's report under the Drainage Act (DART review)."

CARRIED

Item 7.1 (a) - Business Arising

The report on business arising was reviewed.

Item 7.1 (b) - Current Watershed Conditions

Report Highlights:

- One-month precipitation amounts are well below normal, but long-term trends are within the normal range
- Water levels on the surrounding Great Lakes have dropped from 2021 but remain above average
- Forecasted levels for Lakes St. Clair and Huron show continued decline into 2023
- Flood threat is low owing to reduced precipitation and lower levels on the Great Lakes

Watershed Conditions:

Precipitation

Below average precipitation amounts were seen throughout the Great Lakes basin, with preliminary estimates showing the basin being 75% of average in September. Lakes Michigan-Huron were also below average, estimated at 71% of average precipitation amounts.

Precipitation amounts for the month of September were well below normal for Sarnia, however near- and above-normal precipitation amounts in July and August bolstered the three-month precipitation averages and saw Sarnia and Strathroy in the normal

precipitation range. Near-normal precipitation trends in Sarnia and Strathroy continue through the six- and twelve-month totals as well.

Lake Levels

Water levels on the surrounding Great Lakes continued to drop, with September seeing a 21 cm drop on Lakes Huron and Erie and a 23 cm drop on Lake St. Clair. The lakes also remain well below their maximum monthly mean levels with Lake Huron 66 cm below its 1986 record, Lake St. Clair 47 cm below its 2020 record, and Lake Erie 41 cm below its 2019 record. Despite the downward trend, the lakes remain above average with Lakes Huron, St. Clair and Erie above average by 19 cm, 29 cm and 27 cm, respectively. Furthermore, forecasts depict a continued drop in water levels into early 2023.

Flood Threat

Below-average precipitation amounts in the region, as well as the Great Lakes basin as a whole, have contributed to the decrease in water levels on the surrounding Great Lakes. With water levels dropping in the system, levels at the lower reach of the Sydenham River at Wallaceburg have been noticeably lower compared to previous years. As a result of these conditions, the flood threat is currently low.

Annual water levels at the Wallaceburg stream gauge are shown for the years 2020 to 2022 compared to the top of bank level (orange line). October 2022 is currently 33 cm below the 2021 water level average, and 44 cm below the 2020 average. As of this report, there is 66 cm of freeboard in Wallaceburg.

Item 7.1 (c) – Healthy Watersheds Program Updates

The Healthy Watershed Program has restored or enhanced over 1,000 ha of land, and over 4 million trees planted throughout the region. These projects, along with our outreach and education events aim to minimize non-point source sedimentation, nutrient loading, and thermal changes in water bodies within our watershed. To implement stewardship and outreach, SCRCA staff source grant funding from a variety of sources.

Update:

Outreach and Events

Healthy Watersheds staff continue to host stewardship and agriculturally based outreach events to promote the implementation of best management practices and stewardship within the Sydenham River and St. Clair watershed.

Tuesday, September 6th to Friday, September 9th – **BioStrip Till Tailgate Tour Series**. In collaboration with Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA), this series visits farms that have been practicing BioStrip till or similar strip tilling practices over the course of the year to see how the plants grow, the pros and cons of this best management practice, and how

we can learn from each other. More information on the tours can be found here: https://bit.ly/BioStripTour

Saturday, September 10th – **Ipperwash Beach Cleanup**. Once again, this cleanup had great weather and a great turnout. Over 15 volunteers participated and collected over 25 kilograms of garbage! This event was supported by Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) funding.

Wednesday, September 21st – **TD Tree Days Coldstream CA Planting Event.** To celebrate National Tree Day, SCRCA hosted a tree and shrub planting event. The goal of this public event was to continue to naturalize a portion of the Coldstream Conservation Area that was once used as a campground.

Friday, September 23rd to Sunday, September 25th – **Forest Fall Fair**. Healthy Watershed and Biology staff hosted a booth at the Forest Fall Fair, where they spoke to watershed residents about soil erosion, grants available to watershed residents, Species at Risk, and more!

Outreach Materials assist in promoting stewardship and implementation of best management practices within the Sydenham River and St. Clair watershed.

SCRCA recently was interviewed by "Ranger Em" for the Rogers tv show "Learn with Ranger Em", where Biology staff spoke about Species at Risk that can be found in the Sydenham River and St. Clair watershed. To date, one episode has aired and can be found on YouTube (Flexing our Mussels: https://youtu.be/pzsUDL9L17k). Two more episodes have been recorded with SCRCA, about turtles and the Captive Hatch and Release Program and a dual interview about the Great Lakes with Katie Stammler from Essex Region Conservation Authority.

Stewardship Project Update

This summer and fall have been busy with stewardship projects! Staff has been working with landowners and contractors to implement 3 wetlands (2 acres in total) in the Upper Sydenham and Sydenham Headwaters subwatersheds. Staff are working with partners to create 4 more wetlands (4.5 acres) and 2 erosion control projects this fall. Conservation Services is gearing up for fall site visits and planning for the spring planting season.

A wetland project completed this summer with funding from Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Canada Nature Fund, Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) Middlesex, and MECP COA Landowner Environmental Assistance Program (LEAP) fund.

Grant Update

Newly Awarded Grants for stewardship projects:

OMAFRA COA (\$190,000): funding for two (2) years that will go towards enhancing agricultural stewardship delivery in the Sydenham River and St. Clair watershed to

address climate change resiliency and water quality concerns surrounding rural drainage systems. Provides funding for 2 staff members to complete Agricultural Stewardship and Drainage Stewardship.

OMAFRA COA with the Healthy Lake Huron Conservation Authorities (\$60,000): funding will be used to address the need to reduce nutrient loading and improve water quality in the Great Lakes Basin as identified in the bi-national Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and recommendations from the International Joint Commission.

Item 7.1 (d) - Regulations Activity Summary

The planning activity summary to September 30, 2022 was reviewed.

Item 7.1 (e) – Planning Activity Summary

The planning activity summary to September 30, 2022 was reviewed.

Item 7.1 (f) - Statement of Revenue and Expenditure

The statement of revenue and expenditure to September 30, 2022 was reviewed.

Item 7.1 (g) – Disbursements

The monthly disbursements to September 30, 2022 were reviewed.

Item 7.1 (h) - General Levy Summary

The report on general levy received to September 30, 2022 was reviewed.

Item 7.1 (i) - Investment Reports

The investment reports to September 30, 2022 were reviewed.

Item 7.1 (j) - Communications Update

Memorial Forest Dedications:

Denning's Memorial Forest Program – 2022

The Denning's Memorial Forest Program was established by the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation in partnership with Denning's Bros Funeral Homes in 1997. Through this program, Denning's makes donations on behalf of families they serve, which are used to support conservation education and tree planting efforts throughout the region. In 2017, Denning's Funeral Home expanded into Lambton and Chatham-Kent which also expanded the Memorial Forest Program to include seven funeral homes. Memorial forest dedications were held at Victoria Park in Strathroy (May) and at the Keith

McLean Conservation Lands in Morpeth (September) to celebrate the memory of those lost. The services typically attracted between 70-100 people, each.

In late 2019 and early 2020, Denning's Bros Funeral Homes sold some of their Chatham-Kent establishments and decided to discontinue the dedication service held at the Keith McLean Conservation Lands. Instead, they planned to hold one large event in Strathroy. The 2020 and 2021 services were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On June 18, 2022, Denning's hosted their first "Walk to Remember", which invited families to Denning's Memorial Grove in Strathroy for a walk in memory of their loved ones, followed by refreshments, and the opportunity to place ribbons on a memorial tree. Duncan Skinner, President of the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation was in attendance and addressed the crowd, speaking to the long-standing partnership between Denning's and the Foundation and offering condolences to those who had lost a loved one.

In 2021, \$6,225 was donated to the Foundation by Denning's to support conservation education and tree planting efforts throughout the watershed. The 2022 donation will be made available in early 2023.

St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation Memorial Forest Dedication – 2022After being cancelled in 2020 and 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2022 Foundation Memorial Forest dedication service was held in-person on Sunday, September 25th at the Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area in Petrolia. Duncan Skinner, President of the Foundation and Mike Stark, Chair of the Authority spoke to the over 100 people who attended the service. Between September 2021 and August 2022, 133 trees were dedicated through individual donations to the program. To date, a total of 2,428 trees have been dedicated through the Foundation's Memorial Forest Program.

Conservation Awards:

A list of possible conservation award recipients will be brought forward at the Board meeting in December. Board members wishing to nominate any individual or organization should contact Donna Blue at the SCRCA Administration Office (dblue@scrca.on.ca; (519) 245-3710 Ext. 219).

St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation:

The St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation raises funds to support the work of the Conservation Authority. At the October 13th meeting, the Foundation approved support for the following projects and programs:

- \$70,000 to support Conservation Education.
- \$10,000 to support trail accessibility improvements at the Strathroy Conservation Area.

- \$10,000 to support upgrading three swing sets and associated protective surfacing at the A.W. Campbell and Warwick Conservation Areas.
- \$15,000 to support five intern positions with the Authority in 2023.
- \$2,500 to support the printing and distribution of the Species at Risk (SAR)
 Newsletter that will be distributed to over 60,000 households in the St. Clair
 watershed.

Conservation Education Fundraising:

One of the main Authority programs supported by the Foundation is Conservation Education. Efforts are made to secure funds from corporate sponsors, special events, and the BINGO program. Additionally, the Conservation Authority applies for government grants to support the education program. Current efforts include:

St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation:

Sarnia-Lambton Environmental Association (SLEA)/Bluewater Association for Safety, Environment, and Sustainability (BASES)

For over 20 years, the Sarnia-Lambton Environmental Association (SLEA) has provided \$30,000 in funding to sponsor the "River Critters" (JK-Grade 12) and "Go with the Flow" (JK-Grade 8) in-class conservation education programs, allowing the SCRCA to offer these programs free of charge.

Discussions began in 2021 with the new management team at SLEA and the Bluewater Association for Safety, Environment, and Sustainability (BASES) regarding revitalization of the traditional programs. SCRCA staff continue to engage SLEA and BASES in these discussions and will be presenting to the BASES Board of Directors at an upcoming meeting. Staff are hopeful that these discussions will lead to the continued partnership between the SCRCA and SLEA/BASES.

Plains Midstream Canada

The 2022 Spring Water Awareness Program (SWAP) marked the final year in the current agreement with Plain Midstream Canada (PMC) which saw the organization donate \$5,000 annually to support the program and allow it to be offered free of charge. PMC is interested in continuing to sponsor the program. Official approval is expected in the coming months.

Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR)

The Friends of the St. Clair River community group has committed \$5,000 towards delivering the "River RAP", "Phosphorus 101", and "Watershed 101" education programs to both elementary and secondary school students throughout the 2022-2023 school year.

Canoe Race Donations

The 2022 edition of the Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race, which serves as a

fundraiser for the SCRCA Conservation Education program brought in \$5,053 through registration fees, donations, and t-shirt sales.

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority:

Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) – Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Canada Nature Fund is providing \$28,000 for the 2022-2023 fiscal year (ending March 31, 2023) towards the delivery of the Aquatic Species at Risk education program and the on-going partnership between the SCRCA and Kettle and Stony Point First Nation in developing Species at Risk education programs that pair western science with Indigenous-based knowledge to students at Hillside Elementary school.

Media and Social Media Analytics:

SCRCA staff circulate notices, media releases, and other communications through local media outlets and social media. The following statistics cover the timeframe from August 1, 2022, to September 30, 2022.

Media Relations

Activity	2022 (August - September)	2021 (August - September)
Media Releases	7	3
News Article Mentions	104	129

Social Media

Facebook

Activity	Total	2022 (August - September)	2021 (August - September)
Post Reach*		11,894	17,905
Page Visits		706	403
New Likes/Followers	2,371	31	23
Posts		45	45

*Post Reach – The number of people who saw any content from your Page or about your Page, including posts, stories, ads, social information from people who interact with your Page, etc.

Twitter

Activity	Total	2022 (August - September)	2021 (August - September)
Tweets	-	38	58
Retweets	-	44	24
New Followers	881	15	15
Engagements*		553	327

^{*} Engagements = clicks, retweets, replies, follows, and likes

SCRCA Website

Activity	2022 (August - September)	2021 (August - September)
Website Views	29,729	30,689
Website Visitors	10,545	9,562

Strategic Objectives(s):

Goal 3 – Provide recreation and education opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn from our natural environment.

Item 7.1 (k) – Education Update

Fall Education Program Summary:

Field Trips

Outdoor Field Trips to the L.C. Henderson Conservation Area continue to be in high demand. Fall field trip bookings are nearly full. St. Clair Education Staff expect to host over 2,000 students during the months of October and November. Secondary School bookings continue to increase, with nearly 500 secondary students participating in programming this Fall. This increase demonstrates St. Clair's capacity to grow the Education Department.

Nature in Your Neighbourhood

Schoolyard programs were created to keep students connected to nature throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. These programs were so popular that St. Clair Conservation continues to offer them for the 2022-2023 school year. Approximately 500 students will participate in Nature in Your Neighbourhood programming this Fall.

Co-op Student

The Education Department continues to partner with watershed schools by providing coop placements for Secondary Students. This Fall Semester, staff are hosting a student from Saint-François-Xavier Catholic Secondary School.

Special Events:

Geocaching Event – September 11th, 2022

Every year new geocaches are hidden around the L.C. Henderson Conservation Area for the SCRCA's annual Geocaching Event. This September marked the 20th anniversary of the event. Almost 50 geocachers from all over Southern Ontario came to celebrate, spend the day, and see how many new caches they could add to their list.

Fall Fairs - Agriculture in the Classroom

The St. Clair Education Team was thrilled to be back at the fall fairs this year to teach students and families about our watershed and the importance of conservation. Participants also learned about agricultural best management practices that help both farmers and wildlife.

Forest Fall Fair – September 12th, 2022: ~150 students Wyoming Fall Fair – September 13th, 2022: ~100 students Brigden Fall Fair – October 7th, 2022: ~80 students and families

Chatham-Kent and Lambton Children's Water Festival – October 4th-6th, 2022

After a two-year hiatus, the Children's Water Festival was once again successfully held over three days at the C.M. Wilson Conservation Area near Chatham. St. Clair Conservation Education staff continue to assist Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority in organizing and overseeing the festival. Approximately 350 Secondary School students attended as volunteer instructors, running water-themed activities for approximately 2,000 grade 3-5 students from all over Lambton County and the Regional Municipality of Chatham-Kent.

Lambton Wildlife Healing Hike at L.C. Henderson Conservation Area – October 15th, 2022

Education Staff led a two-hour Healing Hike for Lambton Wildlife Inc. Ten people were in attendance. Healing Hikes promote the use of Conservation Areas to relieve stress and improve mental health. Education Staff hope to create more opportunities to engage the watershed community in this way.

Sponsored Education Program Updates:

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

Negotiations continue with BASES to provide \$30,000 in funding annually to deliver Conservation Education in-school programming.

Friends of the St. Clair River Programming

FOSCR continues to sponsor two in-school programs (Phosphorus 101 and River RAP) for the 2022-2023 school year. Programs will commence January 2023. Several teachers have already requested bookings.

Plains Midstream Canada - Spring Water Awareness Program

St. Clair Education is hopeful to continue to receive funding for this popular program. Plains Midstream Canada has indicated that there is interest in continuing to sponsor the program. Final approval should occur sometime before November 2022. Programming is planned to occur during the month of April 2023.

Canadian Nature Fund - Year 4:

Land-Based Education Project

The relationship between Conservation Education Staff and Hillside School staff at Kettle and Stony Point First Nation continues to grow. Education staff continue to partner in the development of the school's Land-Based Education Program. Fall programming will commence November 1st, 2022, running weekly until January 2023. Since the Canada Nature Fund Grant will be finished in March of 2023, Education Staff are hopeful to acquire additional funding to ensure this valuable partnership can continue.

Aquatic Species at Risk Program – Winter 2023

Canada Nature Fund continues to sponsor this in-school program, allowing Education Staff to deliver locally relevant Species at Risk programming to watershed students. Programming will take place between January and March 2023.

Committee Involvement:

Lambton County Trails Committee

Education Staff continue to be active on this committee, to highlight and promote Conservation Area projects and Special Events to the larger Lambton County community.

Rekindle the Sparks Planning Committee

Serving as Co-Chair, Education Staff continue to provide leadership to this committee. The 2022 Rekindle the Sparks Workshop will be held in-person at Ganaraska Forest Centre on November 16th-18th. This annual conference brings together Conservation Authority Educators from across the province to strengthen networks and enhance Conservation Education.

Arbour Week Committee

The Education Team continues to support the Arbour Week committee. Of upcoming importance, St. Clair Conservation will be delivering tree seedlings to the winning classes of the 2022 Arbour Week Poetry Contest.

Item 7.1 (I) - St. Clair River Area of Concern Update

RAP Coordination

BUI 1- Restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption

To assist in gathering insight on the habits of recreational and sports anglers, a community survey remains available for those that fish the St. Clair River. The information collected will assist in the assessment of this Beneficial Use Impairment. The survey was launched in the spring of 2021 and will remain available until the end of December 2022. Through the use of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, additional efforts were made in August 2022 and October 2022 to promote completion of the survey. Direct emailing to relevant area businesses also occurred in August 2022. The survey remains available for completion online at the Friends of the St. Clair River website (www.friendsofstclair.ca).

BUI 9- Restrictions on drinking water consumption or taste and odour problems At the January 20, 2022 meeting of the Canadian RAP Implementation Committee (CRIC),

the Draft Assessment Report for the restrictions on drinking water consumption or taste and odour problems BUI was approved to enter the re-designation process towards Not Impaired. Engagement activities are now underway. A presentation was made to Aamjiwnaang First Nation Chief and Council on May 30, 2022, the Walpole Island First Nation community on July 6, 2022, and the Walpole Island First Nation Infrastructure Committee on July 21, 2022. A presentation to the newly elected Walpole Island First Nation Chief and Council is anticipated in the winter of 2022. A presentation to the Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) will follow. Questions and comments raised during the sessions are documented and responses are provided and tracked for reporting purposes.

2022 – 2027 St. Clair River AOC Workplan

Development of the 2022-2027 Workplan for the St. Clair River Area of Concern is currently underway. It will focus on outlining the key actions that need to be completed over the next five years to be able to redesignate the five remaining Beneficial Use Impairments to a Not Impaired status.

Administration

Funding for the RAP Coordinator position is provided by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP) and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). The current agreement with MECP is in place until February 28, 2024. The agreement with ECCC is in place until March 31, 2023 and has an option to be

extended until March 31, 2024. In accordance with the agreements, the SCRCA will be providing periodic updates to MECP and ECCC on the status of the project work and allocation of project funds. An Interim Progress Report for MECP is being prepared for submission by November 1, 2022.

Recent Meetings

Canadian RAP Implementation Committee (CRIC)

- January 20, 2022
- June 23, 2022
- Next Meeting: November 2022

Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR)

- February 15, 2022
- May 10, 2022
- September 21, 2022
- Next Meeting: December 2022

Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC)

- January 27, 2022
- March 24, 2022
- June 23, 2022
- Next Meeting: November 1, 2022

Outreach and Engagement

Redesignation Event

Members of the BPAC gathered September 13, 2022, aboard the Duc d'Orleans to celebrate four milestones in the restoration of the St. Clair River – the re-designation of four BUIs to Not Impaired on the Canadian side of the River – Fish Tumours or Other Deformities, Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproduction Problems, Restrictions on Dredging Activities, and Beach Closings. The 50th Anniversary of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement was also recognized during the celebrations. Due to capacity limitations, the event was by invite only which welcomed those who had been involved in the St. Clair River Area of Concern program. In addition to BPAC members, guests included members from the Canadian Remedial Action Plan Implementation Committee, Friends of the St. Clair River (Canada and U.S.), and representatives from provincial and federal agencies, local elected officials, members of Aamjiwnaang First Nation and Walpole Island First Nation, and American partners. The RAP Coordinator participated in interviews with local media to share updates on the St. Clair River Area of Concern.

Community Events

The RAP Office provided support to the Friends of the St. Clair River at the following community events – Sombra Days on July 9, 2022, and Mermaids and Mariners on August 20, 2022. The support provided consisted of equipment and hand-outs for the

booth and staffing of the booth. The on-going Fish Consumption Survey was also promoted during the events.

Newsletter

Friends of the St. Clair River and the RAP Office continue to partner on the production of St. Clair River News, a free monthly e-newsletter. The goal of this newsletter is to increase awareness and engagement in the Area of Concern and highlight environmental initiatives happening in the region.

Link to the most recent Newsletter: October E-Newsletter

Strategic Objectives(s):

Goal 2 – Protect, manage, and restore our natural systems including woodlands, wetlands, waterways, and lakes.

Goal 3 – Provide recreation and education opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn from our natural environment.

BD-22-112

Burrell – Grimes

"That the Board of Directors approves the consent agenda and receives the accompanying items 7.1 (a) - 7.1 (l)."

CARRIED

BD-22-113

Loosley – Huszka

"That the Board of Directors move in-camera at 1:08 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter, involving an identifiable individual, with only the Administrative Assistant/Board Coordinator and General Manager remaining."

CARRIED

BD-22-114

Kennes - Burrell

"That the Board of Directors rise and report at 1:15 p.m."

CARRIED

BD-22-115

Stark - Kennes

"That the Board of Directors approves the change in status of the staff member as per the in-camera motion and further directs that a performance review be held annually within 1 week of the employment anniversary date."

CARRIED

BD-22-116 Burrell – Faas "That the meeting be adjourned at 1:20 pm."

CARRIED

Mike Stark Chair Ken Phillips General Manager