

20
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Conservation
ONTARIO

Annual Report



Cover: 📍 Little Bluff Conservation Area (Quinte Conservation)

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Dave Barton
Chair, Board of Directors,
Conservation Ontario



Angela Coleman
General Manager,
Conservation Ontario

Message from the Chair and General Manager

Powered by Purpose

At the core of Ontario's conservation system are shared values that guide everything we do: responsibility to communities, stewardship of land and water, respect for local knowledge, cooperation, and accountability in public service. In 2025, these values shaped how conservation authorities (CAs) responded to a changing environmental and policy landscape.

Across the province, CAs remained focused on protecting people, property, and natural systems, while supporting healthy watersheds that underpin long-term environmental and economic well-being. With extreme wet and dry weather, this work is more important than ever. Science-based decision-making and local expertise continue to guide how we manage risk and support communities.



A key priority has been finding the right balance between strong environmental protection and efficient, predictable approvals. Working closely with municipalities and the development community, we are advancing partnerships that improve clarity, reduce delays, and support responsible growth. By identifying best practices and leveraging new technologies, we can streamline processes without compromising safety or environmental standards.

This work reflects a broader commitment to building resilient and vibrant communities. Well-planned development and watershed protection must go hand in hand, particularly as we respond to increasing climate pressures.

The year also reinforced the importance of local decision-making and working together. Conservation Ontario continues to advocate for our network, our collective mandate under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, and ensuring the system remains transparent, accountable, and responsive.

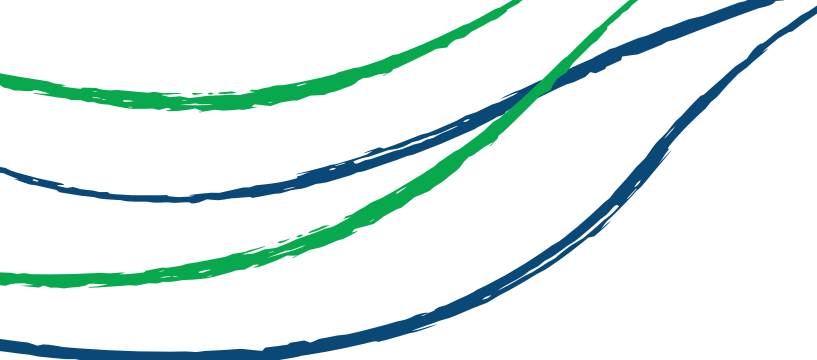
Our engagement on proposed regional consolidation and boundary changes reflected a clear, values-driven message: modernization must enhance—not diminish—local expertise, meaningful engagement, and sound governance.

CAs deliver services fundamental to public safety, including flood and erosion control, natural hazard management, development permitting, and water monitoring. These are not only technical responsibilities, they are essential to protecting communities now and in the future.

Looking ahead, we will continue to focus on practical solutions that balance protection with progress. Through strong partnerships, clear processes, and a commitment to innovation, CAs will remain trusted, effective, and ready to meet future challenges.

CAs showcase what is possible when we work together with common purpose for the good of watersheds in Ontario.

We thank our members, partners, and staff for your leadership and commitment throughout 2025.



Conservation Authorities Act

Advocating for Local Conservation

On October 31, 2025, the Province introduced legislation to establish the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency. Proposed amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* were introduced through *Bill 68, Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2025 (No. 2)* on November 6, 2025, and received Royal Assent on November 27, 2025. Shortly after the legislation was introduced, the Province launched a public consultation on proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities (CAs) into seven regional CAs. (*Subsequently amended to nine regional CAs in 2026*).

To inform its submission to the Province, Conservation Ontario (CO) hosted regular discussions with CA leadership to gather feedback and explore a right-sized approach to any potential restructuring.

CO's submission was shaped by input from CAs, elected officials, Indigenous community members, municipalities, environmental and agricultural organizations, and other partners. The submission highlighted the importance of maintaining local, watershed-based decision-making, on-the-ground service delivery, and strong collaboration with key partners—including municipalities—to support effective watershed management in Ontario.

In addition, CO and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario jointly submitted a letter to the Honourable Todd McCarthy, Minister of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, outlining shared recommendations from both associations.



Did You Know?

The *Conservation Authorities Act* provides a legislative framework that enables conservation authorities (CAs) to deliver watershed-based programs and services across Ontario. These programs conserve natural resources, protect people and property from natural hazards, safeguard municipal drinking water sources, and provide access to natural spaces. Each CA is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the municipalities within the watershed it serves.



"The *Conservation Authorities Act* provides the foundation for watershed-based management in Ontario, enabling conservation authorities to protect people and property from natural hazards while conserving natural resources. Its strength lies in a local, collaborative, governance model that brings municipalities together to make science-based decisions that support resilient communities."

Ed McGugan

Vice-Chair, Conservation Ontario Board of Directors

Collaboration is central to this work. CAs work closely with municipalities, provincial and federal governments, Indigenous communities, local landowners, and community organizations to advance initiatives that reflect the needs, pressures, and priorities of the communities they serve.

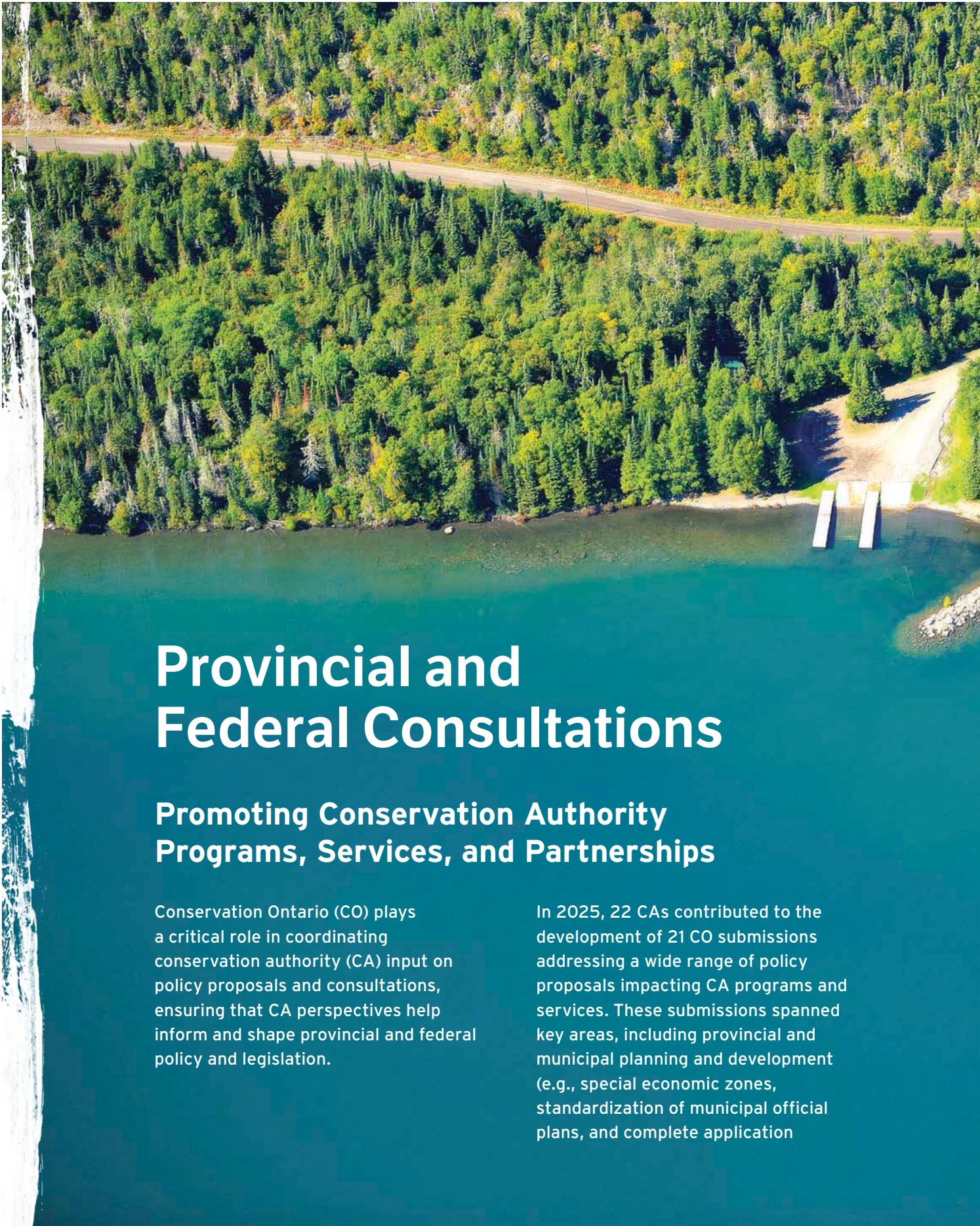
While the legislative framework has evolved over time, the core principle of local, watershed-based conservation and resource management continues to guide the work of CAs across Ontario.

Showcasing Strong Governance, Accountability, and Transparency

Conservation Ontario and Ontario's 36 conservation authorities (CAs) demonstrate a strong commitment to governance, accountability, and transparency.

In 2025, all CAs complied with the provisions of the *Conservation Authorities Act* related to the roles of chair and vice-chair, ensuring that these positions were not held for more than two consecutive terms unless a Ministerial exemption had been granted.

All CAs maintained up-to-date governance webpages, providing public access to governance materials in accordance with Ontario Regulation 400/22 (Information Requirements).

An aerial photograph of a large body of water, likely a reservoir or lake, surrounded by dense green forest. A road runs along the top edge of the forest. In the lower right, a concrete dam structure is visible, with water flowing over it. The sky is not visible, and the overall scene is a lush, natural landscape.

Provincial and Federal Consultations

Promoting Conservation Authority Programs, Services, and Partnerships

Conservation Ontario (CO) plays a critical role in coordinating conservation authority (CA) input on policy proposals and consultations, ensuring that CA perspectives help inform and shape provincial and federal policy and legislation.

In 2025, 22 CAs contributed to the development of 21 CO submissions addressing a wide range of policy proposals impacting CA programs and services. These submissions spanned key areas, including provincial and municipal planning and development (e.g., special economic zones, standardization of municipal official plans, and complete application



requirements for municipal planning), drinking water source protection (e.g., *Clean Water Act* legislative and regulatory amendment), and CA governance (e.g., proposed regional consolidation of CAs).

In January 2025, CO submitted its 2024 annual report on the Class Environmental Assessment

for Remedial Flood and Erosion Control Projects to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). CO works closely with the MECP to monitor the use of the Class EA process, ensuring it remains effective, efficient, and responsive to the evolving needs of CAs and the communities they serve.

📍 Little Trout Bay Conservation Area (Lakehead Region CA)



▲ Staff from the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority participated in a Lean Review Workshop, undertaking process mapping to improve efficiency and service delivery.

Client Service and Streamlining Initiative

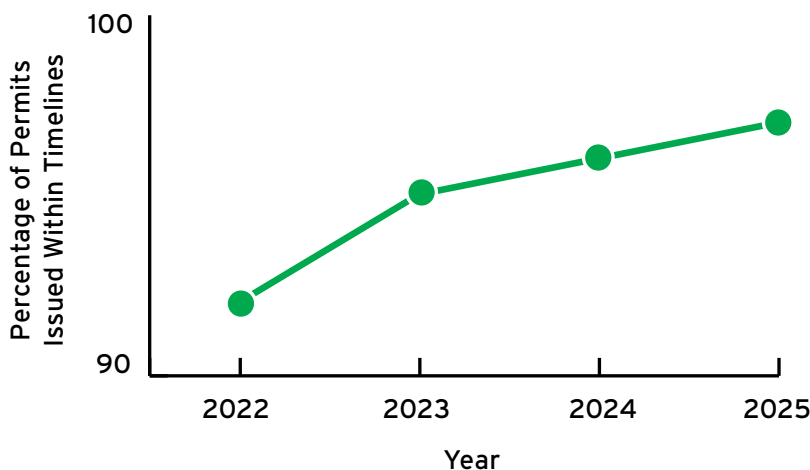
Service Excellence in Action: Modern Services to Support Resilient Communities

Conservation authorities (CAs) support comprehensive land use planning and informed development decisions across Ontario. As our need for housing and essential infrastructure continues to grow, the technical, science-based reviews undertaken by CAs help enhance public safety and strengthen community resilience. These reviews reduce risks associated with natural hazards, helping to protect homes, businesses, community services, and critical infrastructure.

To support these critical roles, CAs continue to adopt new tools, technologies, and approaches that enable robust and efficient decision-making. Across the province, CAs are implementing modern database systems, e-permitting platforms, and improved client support materials. These investments help ensure high-quality applications, more efficient permitting outcomes, and stronger coordination with municipal partners.

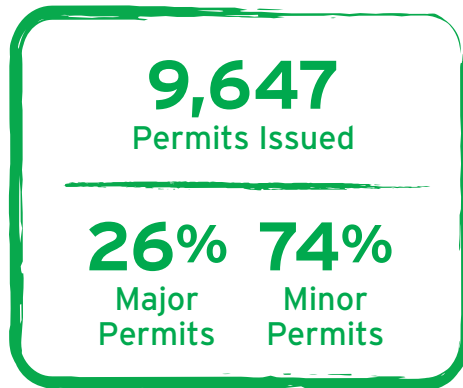
Conservation Ontario supports excellence across the network by facilitating issues management, developing guidance and training, and sharing best practices among CAs.

To highlight this work, CAs report annually on permit review and decision timelines in accordance with Ontario Regulation 686/21.



In 2025, CAs demonstrated a strong commitment to client service and efficient processes, issuing 97 per cent of permits within applicable timelines. Ongoing investments in program improvements have contributed to enhancements in service timelines and client service since tracking began in 2022.

Elements of Service Excellence



2025 Annual Report



Exploring Service Efficiencies through Lean Six Sigma

In 2025, Conservation Ontario (CO) partnered with three pilot conservation authorities (CAs) to review their development approvals processes and identify opportunities to enhance efficiency and customer service.

Using Lean Six Sigma methodologies, the Grand River, Lake Simcoe Region, and Otonabee Region CAs worked with consultants to map their internal processes for development application submission, review, and decision-making. Through facilitated workshops, CA staff examined each step of the process and explored what an ideal future state could look like, helping to identify opportunities for improvement and enhance clarity for applicants.

A final report outlining process insights and recommendations will be shared in 2026.

“Conservation authority development review work is fundamentally about protecting people and property from natural hazards. Behind every decision are technical and scientific considerations that help safeguard the public and reduce risk, enabling resilient development that supports the needs of Ontarians.

At the Grand River Conservation Authority, our team is focused on continuously improving how we deliver this critical service. By applying Lean Six Sigma methodologies, we are strengthening our ability to respond to growing development pressures across the watershed. This commitment to continuous improvement is helping us streamline service timelines, clarify technical requirements for applicants, and further strengthen our partnerships with member municipalities and the development community.

The result is a more efficient, transparent, and rigorous process that supports timely decisions while maintaining the high safety and environmental standards that protect people and property.”

Samantha Lawson

Chief Administrative Officer, Grand River Conservation Authority



Flooding

Provincial Flood Forecasting and Warning Workshop - September 16-17

Conservation Ontario partnered with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Provincial Flood Forecasting and Warning Committee to deliver the 2025 Provincial Flood Forecasting and Warning Workshop. This annual event provides an important forum for conservation authority (CA) staff to connect with provincial and national practitioners, strengthening collaboration among agencies involved in flood forecasting and warning, emergency management, flow measurement, and data collection.

The 2025 workshop brought together over 150 practitioners and featured presentations from a diverse range of experts. Topics included emerging technologies, ice-related flooding impacts, low water response, and the application of machine learning to support flood forecasting.

In addition to presentations from CAs and municipal, provincial, and federal partners, the workshop featured insights from key organizations, including CatIQ, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, Aquanty, and Gowling WLG, highlighting the value of cross-sector collaboration in advancing flood forecasting and warning practices.



▲ Participants heard from keynote speaker Trudy Kidd, Warning Preparedness Meteorologist at Environment and Climate Change Canada.

► Angela Coleman, general manager of Conservation Ontario, delivered opening remarks at the 2025 Provincial Flood Forecasting and Warning Workshop.





📍 Cambridge to Paris Rail Trail (Grand River CA)

Great Lakes

Partnering to Improve Lake Erie Water Quality

Conservation Ontario (CO) and conservation authorities (CAs) play a key role in reducing phosphorus loading to Lake Erie through strong, collaborative, partnerships. This work includes contributing to the development of the Canada-Ontario Lake Erie Action Plan in 2018, which outlines more than 120 actions and is guided by a multi-partner Implementation Team focused on addressing harmful algal blooms and improving lake health.

CO and CAs have led initiatives that support agricultural producers in adopting best management practices such as clean water diversion, erosion control, well decommissioning, and cover cropping, alongside nature-based solutions including tree planting and wetland creation. These measures provide additional benefits, such as improved soil health and reduced flood risk.

CAs are advancing science and data collection by monitoring and modelling water quality, and gathering hydrologic and hydraulic data in priority Lake Erie sub-watersheds. This work supports seasonal and annual assessments of phosphorus loads, helping to track progress and inform adaptive management approaches.

The Canada Water Agency has committed more than \$45 million in funding to CAs for Lake Erie watershed initiatives, further strengthening on-the-ground action.

Implementation of the Action Plan contributes to a broader binational effort under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, specifically Nutrients Annex 4, which brings together Canadian and American federal, provincial, and state partners. CO represents CAs in this forum, ensuring their contributions are recognized and integrated into coordinated efforts to protect the Great Lakes.

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Advocacy - Supporting Investment in the Work of Conservation Authorities

Conservation Ontario (CO) advocated for sustained federal investment in local projects through a pre-budget submission and participation in Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Day on the Hill, emphasizing the importance of protecting shared boundary waters to support a healthy economy.

Sixteen binational science and resource management agencies, along with Ontario conservation agencies, endorsed a Joint Statement to Members of Parliament (MPs) and Senators outlining key recommendations to advance the work of conservation authorities:

- ◆ Accelerate funding commitments under the Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative (GLFEI) and strengthen and renew the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health (COA) and the St. Lawrence Action Plan.
- ◆ Collaborate with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin freshwater community to enhance watershed management, science, protection, restoration, and climate resilience efforts.

- ◆ Build on existing expertise by investing in organizations to expand programs such as invasive species prevention and phosphorus reduction, while addressing ongoing and emerging threats including climate change, pollution, and habitat loss.

CO staff contributed to monthly multi-stakeholder planning meetings and led development of the Joint Statement. Board members and staff also participated in the Parliament Hill Day, where CO hosted a display at an evening reception attended by 127 MPs and Senators.

"Protecting the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River is essential to the health of our communities, environment, and economy. Through collaboration and sustained investment, conservation authorities are delivering local solutions that strengthen resilience and safeguard these shared waters for future generations."

Pat Warren

Vice-Chair, Conservation Ontario Board of Directors



Municipal Leadership Networking Event

Conservation Ontario co-hosted an evening networking reception with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative during the Association of Municipalities of Ontario Annual Conference in Ottawa.

The event brought together over 200 municipal officials, conservation authority representatives, environmental non-governmental organization partners, and provincial representatives, creating a valuable opportunity for mayors, municipal and watershed leaders to connect, collaborate, and strengthen partnerships.

Climate Resilient Coastal Communities

Adapting to Coastal Hazards Across the Great Lakes

In 2025, Conservation Ontario (CO) and its project partners celebrated a \$4.1 million investment through Natural Resources Canada's Climate-Resilient Coastal Communities Program to support pilot projects across the Great Lakes region. Of this funding, \$3.1 million supports CO's four-year Adapting to Coastal Hazards Across the Great Lakes project. The initiative brings together expertise, data, and resources to help communities and decision-makers develop action-oriented plans to respond to, recover from, and adapt to the impacts of flooding, erosion, and other coastal hazards.

In January, CO hosted a reception during the Rural Ontario Municipal Association Conference in Toronto to mark the federal funding announcement for the project. More than 55 attendees participated, including members of the CO Board, conservation authority (CA) representatives,

Members of Provincial Parliament, and CA general managers. Mayors and Deputy Mayors also attended, along with representatives and staff from the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Coastal Resilience Commission.

In July, CO and participating CAs hosted regional pilot kick-off events, inviting community members, Indigenous communities, non-profit organizations, and municipal, provincial, and federal partners to learn about project objectives and share local experiences with flooding and erosion impacts.

The project continues to collaborate with and build on lessons from coastal initiatives supported through the Canada Water Agency's Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative.



Bluff erosion impacting homes and local roads along northern Lake Erie.



▲ Launch event at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association Conference in Toronto.



▲ Maitland Valley Conservation Authority's staff and board of directors at the Southern Lake Huron Littoral Cell Adaptation Action Plan Pilot kick off at Goderich Townhall in Goderich.



▲ Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Hamilton Conservation Authority and Conservation Halton staff and board of directors at the Lake Ontario Coastal Resilience Pilot kick off at Jordan Harbour in Jordan.

Throughout the year, the project was promoted to municipal leaders at the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative's Ontario regional meetings in Toronto and Oakville, as well as at the organization's annual conference in Milwaukee. Knowledge sharing also continued through presentations at the Canadian Water Resources Association Workshop titled *Climate Change: Practical Approaches to Water Resources* at the Coastal Zone Canada Conference in Prince Edward Island, and the Latonnell Conservation Symposium in Vaughan.

"The Lake Ontario Coastal Resilience Pilot Project represents a transformative step in advancing our collective response to climate change impacts along the shoreline. We thank the Government of Canada, Conservation Ontario, and our partner conservation authorities in Hamilton and Halton for their critical support. This project exemplifies the power of collaboration between conservation authorities and municipalities to protect and enhance our shared natural resources."

John Metcalfe

Chair of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority Board of Directors
and Councillor of Haldimand County



▲ Conservation Ontario provided a project update at Coastal Zone Canada Conference in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.



▲ Conservation Ontario presented on the project at the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



▲ Joint session with Conservation Ontario, Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities initiative, Canada Water Agency, and Natural Resources Canada on community coastal resilience in Vaughan.



▲ Coastal conservation authorities toured northern Lake Erie from Port Stanley to Long Point, starting and ending at Springwater Conservation Area.

"On behalf of the Board of the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority, I would like to express our gratitude to the Federal Government for recognizing the shores of the Great Lakes as Coastal Areas and for their financial support of this crucial program. These funds will enable the LRCA and our Member Municipalities to strengthen local efforts, while also enhancing the collective response of conservation authorities to climate change at both the regional and provincial levels."

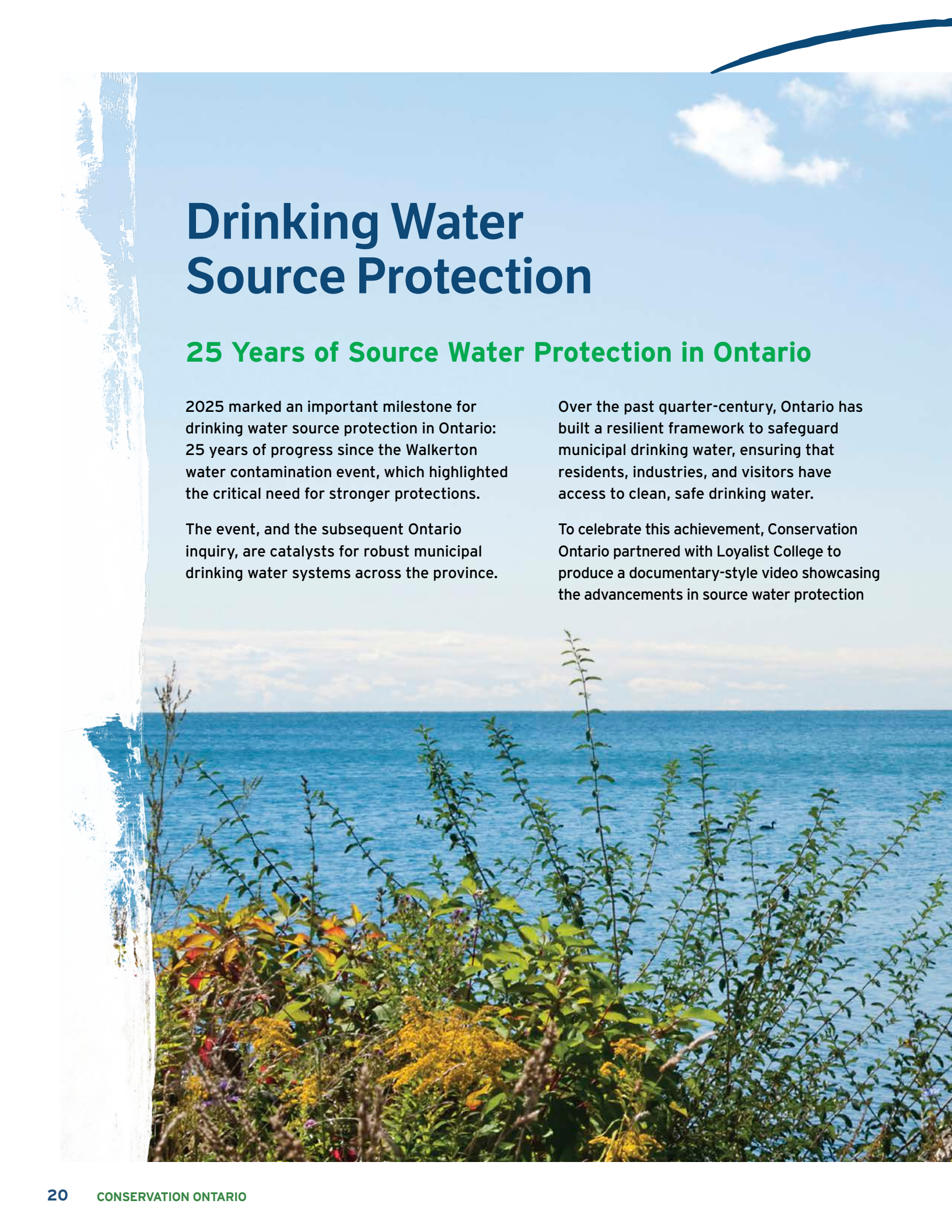
Donna Blunt

*Chair of the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority
Board of Directors and Councillor of the Municipality
of Shuniah*



▲ Coastal conservation authorities at the annual network knowledge exchange workshop.

In March, 20 of Ontario's 26 coastal conservation authorities (CAs) participated in a spring workshop featuring presentations from Federal partners on emerging science and funding opportunities, along with discussions on best practices, local innovations, and lessons learned. In October, representatives from 14 coastal CAs participated in a field tour along the Lake Erie shoreline to observe and discuss coastal hazards affecting local communities and properties. These professional development opportunities continue to equip CAs with the knowledge and tools needed to support resilient communities facing current and future coastal risks.



Drinking Water Source Protection

25 Years of Source Water Protection in Ontario

2025 marked an important milestone for drinking water source protection in Ontario: 25 years of progress since the Walkerton water contamination event, which highlighted the critical need for stronger protections.

The event, and the subsequent Ontario inquiry, are catalysts for robust municipal drinking water systems across the province.

Over the past quarter-century, Ontario has built a resilient framework to safeguard municipal drinking water, ensuring that residents, industries, and visitors have access to clean, safe drinking water.

To celebrate this achievement, Conservation Ontario partnered with Loyalist College to produce a documentary-style video showcasing the advancements in source water protection

across the province. The video highlights how the Province, conservation authorities, municipalities, and communities have worked together to reduce risks, implement science-based protections, and strengthen Ontario's water systems—demonstrating 25 years of innovation, collaboration, and measurable results.

This milestone is an opportunity to reflect on past successes and reaffirm our ongoing commitment to safeguarding Ontario's drinking water for current and future generations.



▲ Conservation Authority Project Managers meet with staff from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to discuss proposed regulatory amendments to the *Clean Water Act*.



Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program

Partnerships Growing Resilient Agricultural Landscapes

The Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program (RALP) Marginal Lands Initiative supports creation and enhancement of natural features on marginal agricultural lands to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester carbon, and increase ecosystem goods and services. Funded through a Federal-Provincial investment under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP), the program delivered significant environmental benefits across Ontario in 2025.

Conservation Ontario administered the Federal program in collaboration with the Province of Ontario and worked with 16 local delivery partners, including conservation authorities (CAs), and environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS).

Together, these partners support farmers implementing projects such as wetland restoration, tree planting, and the establishment of riparian buffers and pollinator habitats on marginal agricultural lands across Ontario. Natural features contribute to improved soil health, enhanced biodiversity, better water quality, and long-term carbon storage—helping to strengthen the resilience of farmland to climate extremes.

In 2025, 132 projects were initiated across 125 properties, demonstrating the effectiveness of a collaborative, locally delivered approach. CAs and partner organizations played a key role in working directly with landowners, providing technical expertise, and ensuring strong ecological and agricultural outcomes.

These results demonstrate how coordinated action, supported by strategic federal-provincial investment, is enhancing natural infrastructure across Ontario's agricultural landscapes. Through strong partnerships and active producer engagement, the RALP Marginal Lands Initiative continues to advance climate-resilient and sustainable land management practices across the province.

Project highlights for 2025 included:

- 19 grassland projects
- Five pollinator or other perennial cover projects
- 62 shelterbelts
- Eight tree and shrub planting projects
- 29 riparian buffer projects
- Eight wetland restoration or construction projects
- One strip planting / grassed waterway project



This Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority project planted 350 native willow and dogwood shrubs along a surface water drainage feature in a marginal farmland area, enhancing 262 metres of riparian buffer and improving habitat and water quality.



Partnerships

Implementing Partner for the Cities Initiative's Economic Transformation Action Plan (2025-2035)

Conservation Ontario (CO) is an implementing partner for the *Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Economic Transformation Action Plan: A Blueprint for Economic Growth and Freshwater Stewardship in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region*.

In 2025, CO staff contributed to the Waterfronts Transformation Working Group, providing expertise to the Mayors Commission on Economic Transformation in the development of the Action Plan.

This partnership builds on CO's Memorandum of Collaboration with the Cities Initiative's Commission on Community Resilience, reflecting a shared

commitment to strengthen municipal capacity and advance freshwater stewardship. Through this work, conservation authorities (CAs) are supporting municipal partners by sharing knowledge, tools, and expertise to extend the reach and impact of this 10-year blueprint.

CAs work closely with municipalities to advance actions under the Waterfronts Transformation pillar, while contributing to other pillars—industry, transportation, and energy—with a focus on resilience, sustainability, and addressing extreme weather risks.



▲ Laura Kucey, Ontario Regional Coordinator for the Ecological Gifts Program at Environment and Climate Change Canada, leads a workshop for conservation authority staff.

Ecological Gifts Program Workshops - Supporting Conservation Authorities as Landowners

Canada's Ecological Gifts Program allows landowners to donate and protect ecologically sensitive land for future generations, while receiving significant tax benefits. Conservation authorities (CAs) and conservation foundations hold more than 160 Ecological Gifts protecting more than 3,500 hectares of land across the province of Ontario.

With financial support from Environment and Climate Change Canada, Conservation Ontario planned and delivered four regional Ecological Gifts Program workshops for CAs and our partners. Hosted by local CAs, these workshops help participants understand the program and navigate complex management issues while meeting the reporting requirements associated with maintaining ecological gifts.



📍 Aerial view of the Griffith property located in Lombardy, Ontario.
Credit: Rideau Valley Conservation Authority



Credit: Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Stewardship

Supporting Natural Asset Management

A dedicated team of staff from Conservation Ontario (CO) and conservation authorities (CAs) advance initiatives that build capacity in natural asset management across Ontario. This collaborative group includes representatives from Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Conservation Halton, Credit Valley Conservation, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, Lower Trent Region Conservation Authority, and South Nation Conservation.

In 2025, the team developed a new online resource hub to support CAs, municipalities, and partners with practical information and tools for natural asset management.

CO is working in partnership with Asset Management Ontario, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Municipal Finance Officers' Association of Ontario, and the Greenbelt Foundation to lead a community of practice advancing natural asset management planning. This initiative supports leading municipalities and CAs strengthening collaboration and meeting requirements under Ontario Regulation 588/17.

Partners of Choice for Watershed Stewardship and Restoration

Conservation authorities (CAs) are valued partners for municipalities and a wide range of organizations across Ontario in delivering restoration and stewardship initiatives at the local watershed level. Their work extends beyond tree planting to include water quality improvement programs, habitat restoration, and support for agricultural practices that enhance soil health while reducing flood and erosion risks. Together, these efforts improve biodiversity, strengthen climate resilience, and enhance quality of life for watershed residents.

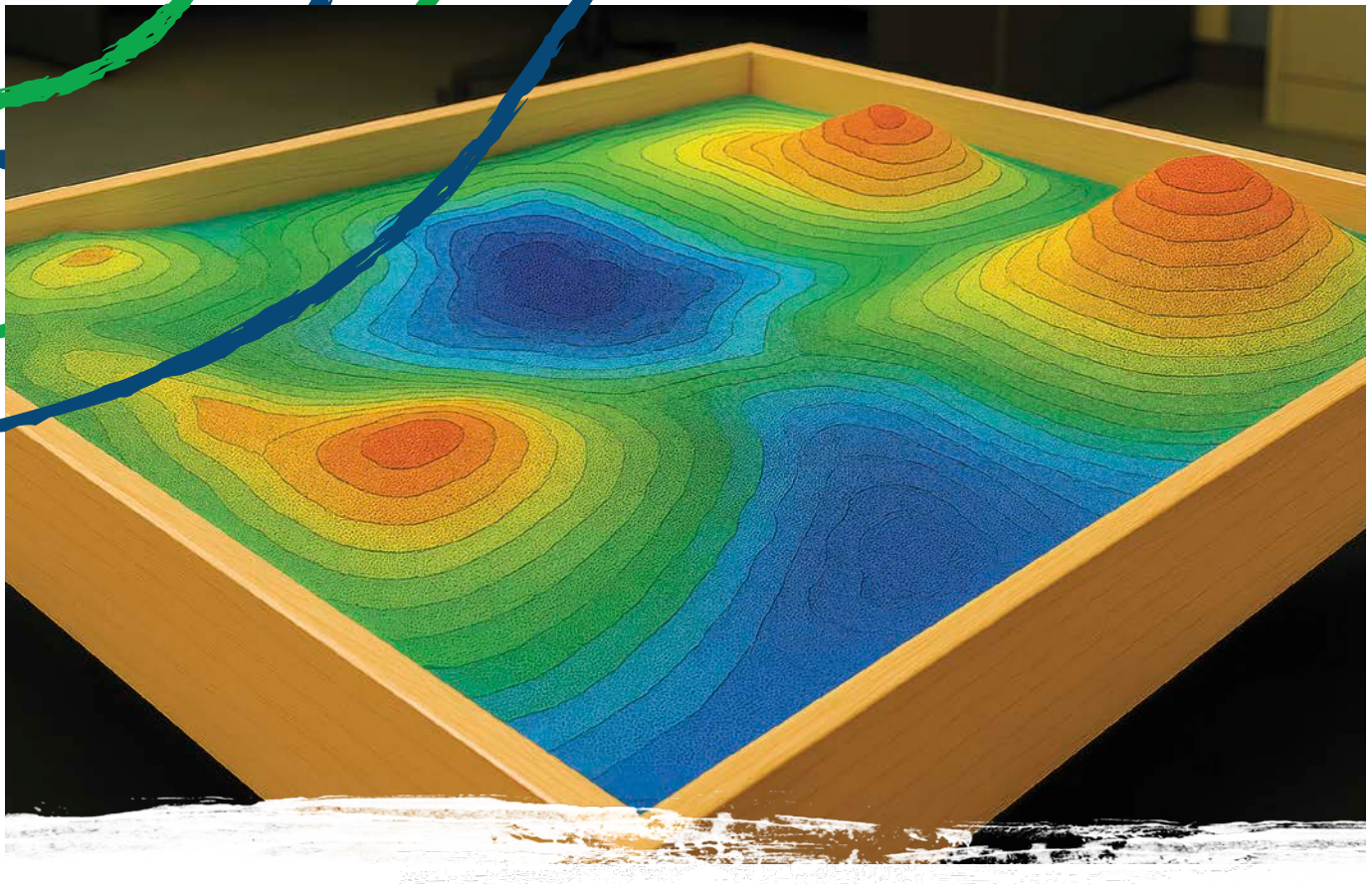
Projects led in partnership with landowners and communities include afforestation and reforestation, riparian and wetland restoration, windbreaks and understory plantings, as well as erosion control and cover cropping initiatives. The success of this work is rooted in collaboration, with CAs recognized for their technical expertise, trusted relationships, and long-standing presence in watersheds across the province.

Conservation Ontario (CO) has partnerships with organizations such as Tree Canada, Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS), Ducks Unlimited, Forests Canada, the Ontario Woodlot Association, and members of Ontario's Soil Action Group. These collaborations are essential to address restoration and stewardship efforts, and partners rely on CAs to achieve shared environmental outcomes.

In 2025, a partnership between CO, Tree Canada, and nine CAs resulted in the planting of more than 252,022 trees and shrubs across 56 sites, covering 154 hectares of public and private land. Plantings included 69 native species, such as White Cedar, Hackberry, Eastern Hemlock, and Tamarack, contributing to ecosystem restoration and supporting the Federal 2 Billion Trees Program. This collaborative effort will continue through 2026.

These initiatives demonstrate the growing recognition of CAs as essential delivery partners in advancing Ontario's long-term environmental goals—supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation, improving soil health, and protecting air and water quality—while building healthier, more sustainable watersheds.





Bulk Purchase

Delivering Value Through Shared Services

Conservation Ontario (CO) delivers strong value to its member conservation authorities (CAs) by coordinating bulk purchasing and shared services that lower costs, improve efficiency, and expand access to essential tools and technologies. Through negotiated agreements—such as the extended Esri Canada Enterprise Agreement—members benefit from leading-edge GIS software, services, and technical support at preferred pricing. Discounted cybersecurity testing and training through KnowBe4 further strengthens digital resilience across participating authorities.

CO has expanded its bulk purchase program for OnBoard meeting management software, enabling more members to modernize board governance while maintaining low individual licensing

costs. Members have access to shared services including CAMaps, ArcGIS Online, and the Teranet GeoWarehouse, ensuring consistent, high-quality mapping and data resources across the province.

Beyond technology and data services, CO supports its members through group insurance benefits that help reduce premiums, as well as shared communications tools and templates that streamline public outreach and promote consistent messaging.

Together, these coordinated programs and shared services enable CAs to operate more efficiently and cost-effectively while benefiting from collective purchasing power, shared expertise, and economies of scale.

Information Management

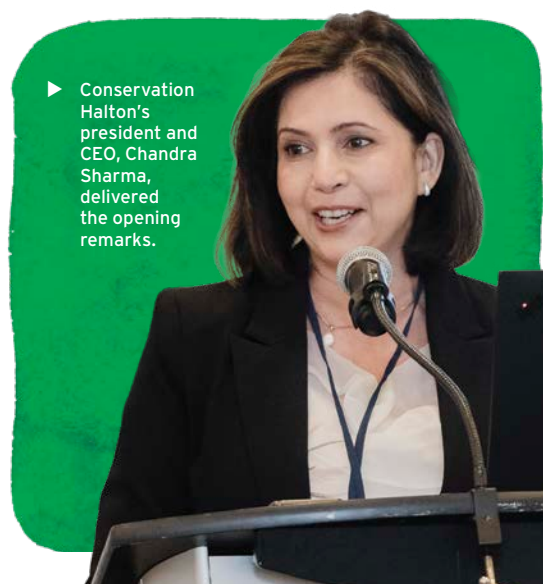
Talking Tech: Conservation Authority Collaborative Information Sessions - April 30-May 1

More than 130 participants attended the 17th Annual Conservation Authority Collaborative Information Sessions (CACIS) Conference, bringing together practitioners and partners from across the sector.

The event featured two concurrent presentation streams and over 30 sessions delivered by representatives from 13 conservation authorities (CAs), the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Brock University, Toronto Metropolitan University, and eight sponsors. Highlights included a welcome address from Chandra Sharma, president and CEO of Conservation Halton, and a keynote presentation by Greg Babinski, who shared practical insights on emerging trends and strategies in geomatics.

Throughout the conference, CA staff delivered a wide range of engaging presentations on topics such as invasive species management, cybersecurity and system vulnerability, strategic decision-making, and applications of artificial intelligence within CA programs.

The event was further enhanced by being held alongside the BeSpatial: Be Inspired Conference, which concluded on April 29 at the same venue, providing additional opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaboration.



📍 Hilton Falls (Conservation Halton)





Indigenous opening by Raiden Levesque
from Credit Valley Conservation.

Events

Latornell Conservation Symposium: Celebrating 30 Years of Conservation Impact

The 2025 Latornell Conservation Symposium was a highly engaging and impactful event, bringing together more than 400 delegates from across the conservation sector. Hosted by Conservation Ontario in partnership with the University of Guelph, the symposium featured a dynamic program of thought-provoking sessions, inspiring speakers, and valuable networking opportunities that energized and connected the conservation community.

Under the theme *Conservation Impact*, the symposium marked three decades of leadership by reflecting on significant achievements, successful initiatives, and the lasting benefits delivered to communities through collective conservation efforts. Program highlights included an inspiring Indigenous opening by Raiden Levesque; a featured panel, *Building on Legacy - How Conservation's Past Informs Its Future*, moderated by Jo-Anne Rzedki of Conservation Ontario; and the return of the Latornell Leadership Awards, which recognized five outstanding leaders within the conservation network.

Delegates engaged in three focused program streams—People, Land, and Water—alongside interactive workshops and a student poster competition that showcased emerging ideas and innovation. Overall, the 2025 Latornell Conservation Symposium was a resounding success, fostering meaningful connections, sparking new thinking, and celebrating the enduring impact of conservation work across Ontario.



▲ Photos from the 2025 symposium highlight key moments from the event, including the keynote address, sponsor and exhibitor showcases, student poster award winners, panel discussions, and leadership award recipients.



Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area (Cattfish Creek CA)

Step Into Nature Healthy Hikes

The Step Into Nature Healthy Hikes campaign encouraged Ontarians to explore Conservation Areas while experiencing the physical and mental health benefits of spending time in nature.

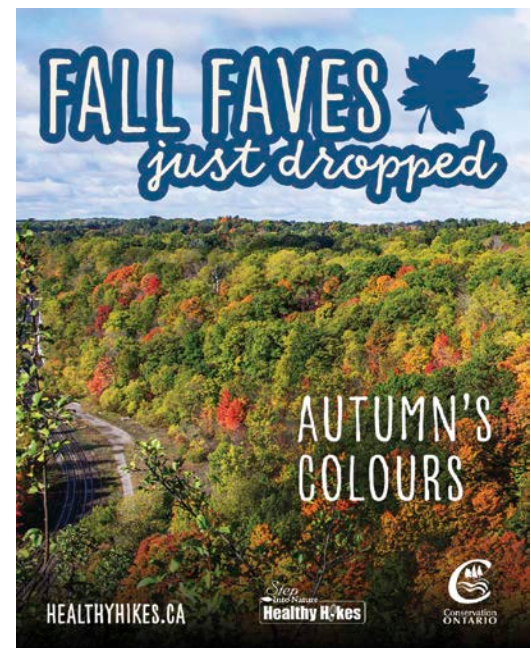
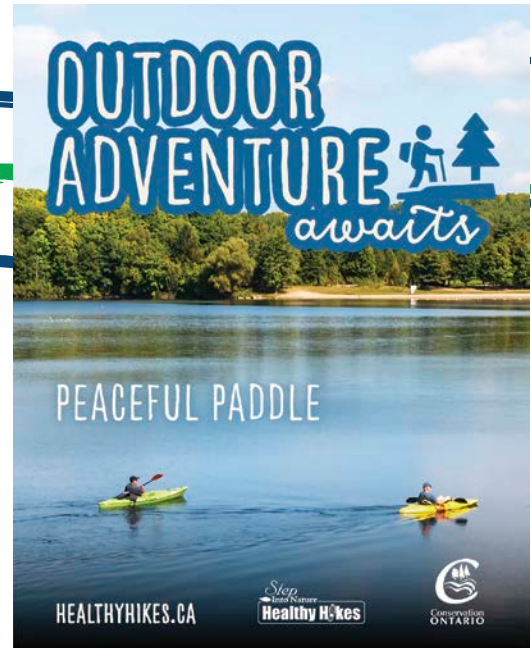
In 2025, Conservation Ontario introduced Freedom in Nature as the campaign's first theme, highlighting how natural spaces provide opportunities for grounding, renewal, and personal well-being. The theme encouraged visitors to move in ways that felt natural and enjoyable, embrace moments of creativity and reflection, and disconnect from the demands of daily life.

Launched annually on the first Monday in May to coincide with Mental Health Week, the campaign continues through October with monthly themes that inspire Ontarians to connect with nature and support their overall health and wellness.

Connecting Communities through Social Media

Conservation Ontario's (CO) social media platforms play an important role connecting with diverse audiences across the province, helping raise awareness of conservation issues and inspire action. Through timely, accessible, and engaging content, these channels amplify key messages, promote programs and events, and highlight the important work of conservation authorities.

By fostering two-way communication, social media also creates opportunities to engage directly with the public, partners, and stakeholders—building stronger relationships and encouraging community participation. As a result, these platforms not only extend the reach of CO's initiatives but also support greater understanding of the value of protecting and restoring Ontario's natural resources.





📍 Christie Lake Conservation Area (Hamilton CA)

Education and Training

2025 Workshops

General Managers Training Session #1: Government Relations

📅 Feb 21
🌲 23 CA staff

Conservation Authorities Coastal Network Workshop

📅 March 4
🌲 40 CA staff

General Managers Training Session #2: The Electoral Cycle - 60 days after an election

📅 March 7
🌲 20 CA staff

Risk Management Officials/ Risk Management Inspectors Seminar

📅 March 18
🌲 35 CA staff

Level 1 Provincial Offences Officer Training Course

📅 April 1-4; April 9-11
🌲 50 CA staff

Drinking Water Source Protection Knowledge Building: Access Environment Demo

📅 April 8
🌲 18 CA staff

Project Managers Meeting

 April 30
 16 CA staff

Conservation Authority Collaborative Information Sessions

 April 30-May 1
 90 CA staff

Project Managers and Source Protection Chairs Meeting

 July 23
 14 CA staff

Provincial Flood Forecasting and Warning Workshop

 September 16-17
 156 CA staff

Conservation Authorities University Executive Development Program: Module 1

 September 23-24
 36 CA staff

Conservation Authorities Coastal Network Field Tour

 October 1
 29 CA staff

Latornell Conservation Symposium

 November 3-4
 165 CA staff

Conservation Authorities Communications Meeting

 November 12
 43 CA staff

Project Managers Retreat

 November 19
 16 CA staff

Project Managers Meeting

 November 20
 20 CA staff

Risk Management Officials/Risk Management Inspectors Seminar

 December 3
 37 CA staff

Drinking Water Source Protection Knowledge Building: Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

 December 8
 29 CA staff

Conservation Authorities University Executive Development Program: Module 2

 December 9-10
 36 CA staff

2025 Webinars

Updates to the *Conservation Authorities Act* Model Hearing Guidelines Webinar

 February 26
 94 CA staff

Latornell Webinar: Insights from Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Annual Regulation Mapping Updates

 May 27
 185 CA staff

Tree Canada/Conservation Ontario Partnership: 2026 Program Webinar

 November 12
 34 CA staff

What We Do

Conservation Ontario represents Ontario's Conservation Authorities (CAs) on issues of common interest to positively influence policy decisions that affect the environment.

CAs are community-based watershed management agencies that implement programs focused on watershed management to safeguard people and property from flooding and other natural hazards. Additionally, they work towards conserving natural resources to promote economic, social, and environmental benefits. CAs operate under the legislative framework of the *Conservation Authorities Act, 1946*.



Conservation Ontario's Business Functions

- 🌲 Policy and Program Development
- 🌲 Government Relations
- 🌲 Business Development and Partnerships
- 🌲 Education and Training
- 🌲 Communications
- 🌲 Corporate Services
- 🌲 Information Management and Research

Board of Directors

Conservation Ontario is governed by an elected six-member Board of Directors.

Dave Barton, Chair
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

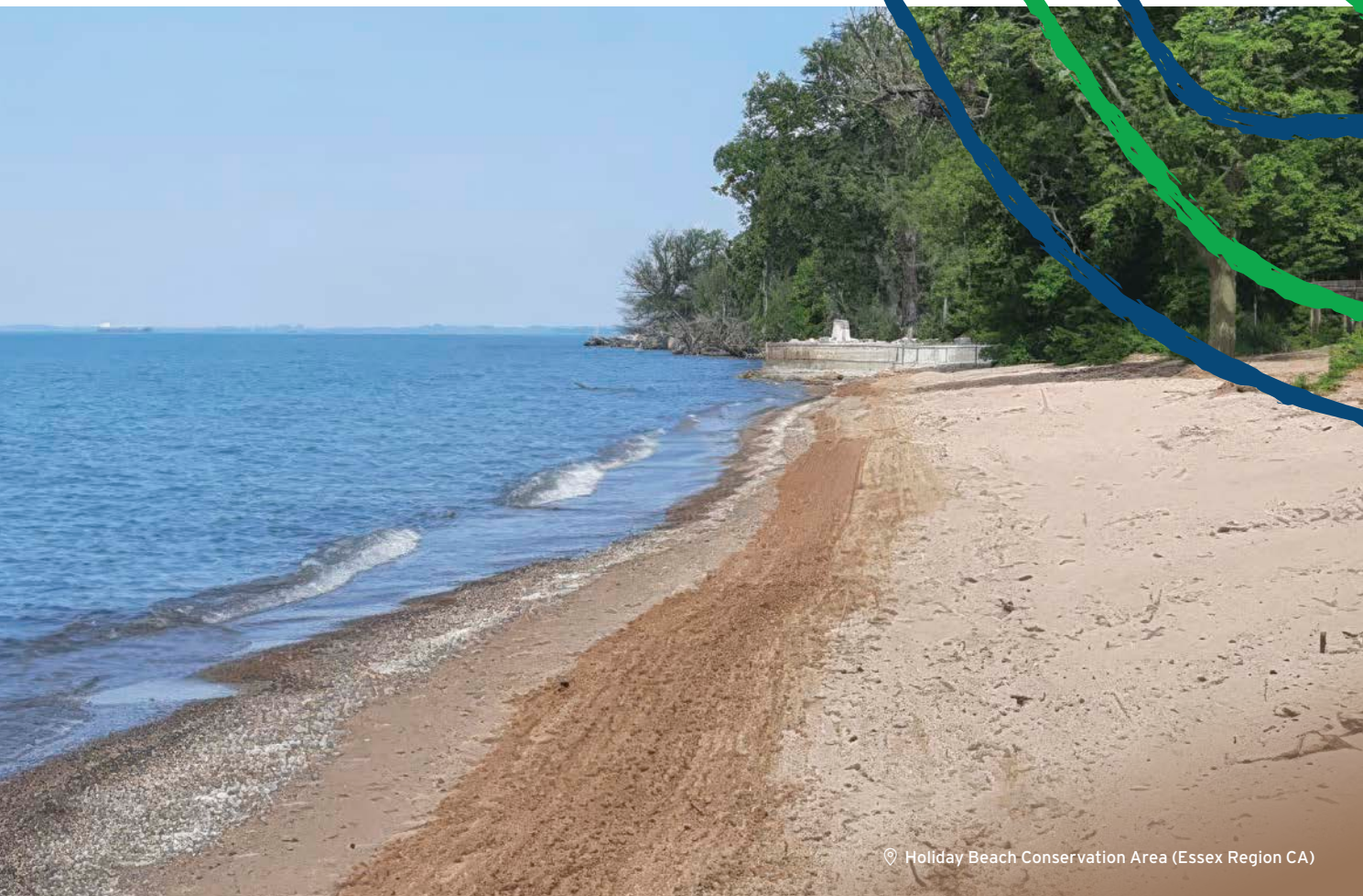
Ed McGugan, Vice Chair
Maitland Valley Conservation Authority

Pat Warren, Vice Chair
Kawartha Conservation

Rob Baldwin, Director
Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority

Brad McNevin, Director
Quinte Conservation

Chandra Sharma, Director
Conservation Halton



How We Work



VISION

Conservation Ontario will engage Conservation Authorities in matters of common interest and to shape effective policies relating to Conservation Authorities.



MISSION

To promote and continually strengthen a watershed-based conservation coalition in Ontario.

“Conservation Ontario plays a vital role in supporting the conservation authority network by bringing people together, sharing knowledge, and advancing practical solutions to complex watershed challenges. Through collaboration, leadership, and a strong commitment to service, the organization helps ensure that conservation authorities are well positioned to protect natural resources and support safe, resilient communities across Ontario. I am proud of the progress we have made together and the continued dedication of our members, partners, and staff in delivering meaningful results for the people and watersheds of this province.”

Dave Barton

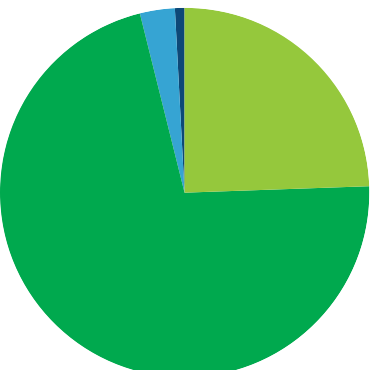
Chair, Conservation Ontario Board of Directors

Financials

Conservation Ontario 2025 Financial Summary

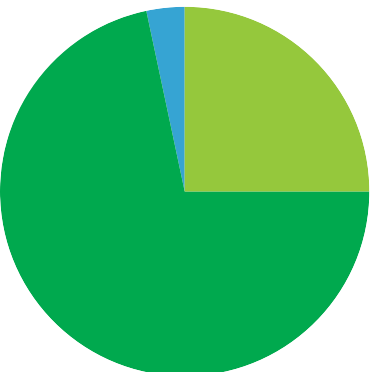
For the financial year ending on December 31, 2025, Conservation Ontario (CO) generated total revenues of \$5,923,932 through membership fees, special projects supported by federal and provincial agreements, partnerships with non-governmental organizations, and self-generated revenues. CO reported a year-end surplus of \$242,975.

This positive result reflects effective budget management and operational efficiencies across the organization. It also demonstrates CO's continued commitment to transparency, accountability, and responsible financial management in support of its mandate and member conservation authorities.



Revenues

Membership Fees	\$1,464,000
Special Projects	\$4,239,467
Source Water Protection	\$178,328
Other	\$42,137
	\$5,923,932



Expenditures

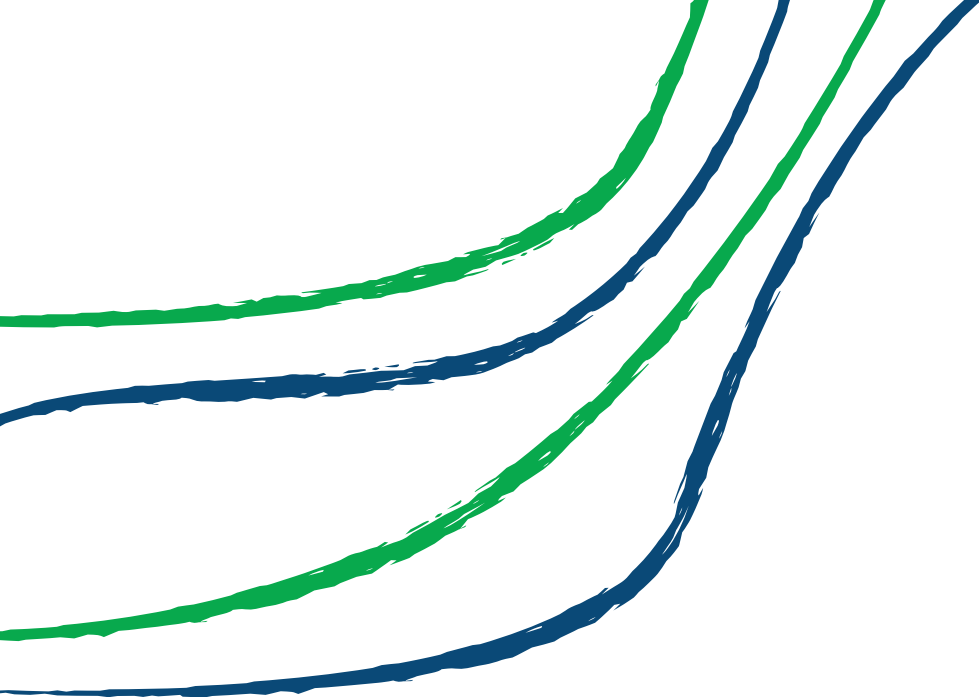
Operations	\$1,429,114
Special Projects	\$4,073,515
Source Water Protection	\$178,328
	\$5,680,957

The surplus of revenues over expenditures is \$242,975.





📍 Rock Glen Conservation Area (Ausable Bayfield CA)



Conservation
ONTARIO

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