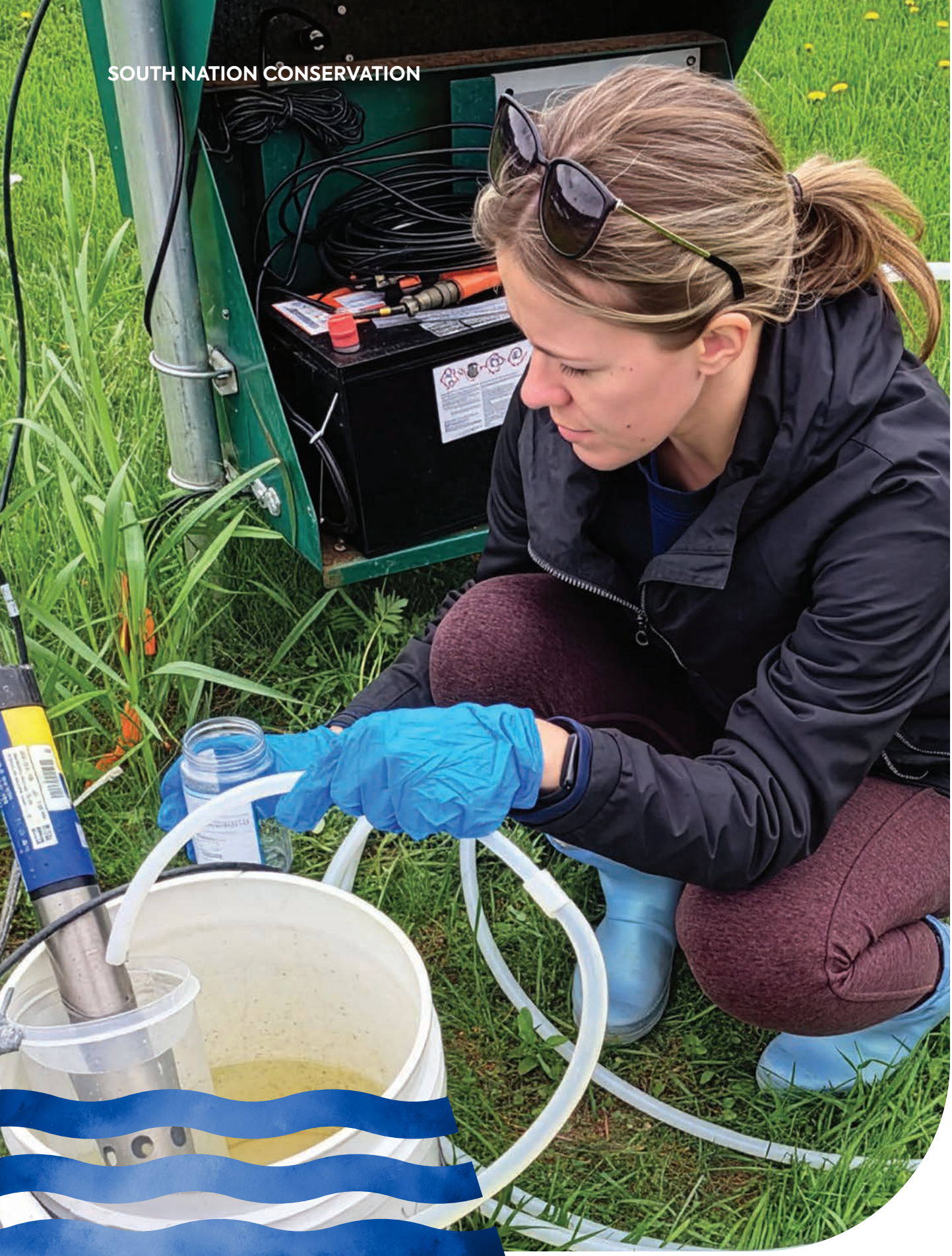




2025 Annual *Report*

South Nation
Conservation
de la Nation Sud



Message

from the Board Chair and Chief Administrative Officer

As we reflect on 2025, we are proud of the work South Nation Conservation (SNC) has carried out across our watershed. Collaboration and shared stewardship remained central to protecting natural resources while supporting the communities where people live, work, and enjoy the outdoors.

Throughout the year, SNC worked alongside member municipalities, partners, landowners, and residents to care for local land and water resources. From supporting responsible development and managing natural hazards, to stewarding conservation lands and monitoring watershed conditions, this work reflects a collective commitment to the long-term health of our region.

Our conservation areas continue to provide valued spaces for recreation, education, and connection to nature. At the same time, our conservation and stewardship initiatives are strengthening ecological resilience across the watershed and helping communities adapt to changing environmental conditions.

We extend our sincere thanks to staff, the Board of Directors, municipal partners, volunteers, and community members whose dedication makes this work possible. Your ongoing collaboration and trust are essential to everything we do.

As we move forward, SNC remains committed to protecting people, property, and the natural environment. Together, we are building a watershed that supports both people and nature for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Steve Densham
Chair, SNC Board of Directors

Carl Bickerdike
Chief Administrative Officer



SNC Approvals Programs:

Planning and Development Reviews, Conservation Authority Regulations, and Municipal Septic Services

The way we plan and build our communities directly affects the health of our natural environment. Environmental planning plays an important role in protecting land and water resources across the watershed.

SNC's Approvals Team helps ensure people and property are protected from natural hazards by supporting local planning and development review in collaboration with member municipalities.

With expertise in flooding, erosion hazards, natural heritage, drinking water source protection, and private servicing, the team provides technical guidance to support sustainable development and informed decision-making.

SNC also delivers septic services under the Ontario Building Code (Part 8 – Sewage Systems) in 17 municipalities, working with landowners and contractors to ensure the proper installation, maintenance, and repair of sewage systems.

Through Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*, SNC's Regulations Program enables staff to work closely with municipal and agency partners, developers, landowners, and contractors to safeguard human life and property from flooding, erosion, and other natural hazards.





The following summary highlights the development and regulatory applications processed by SNC in 2025.

Planning and Development Reviews

- 367 development applications
- 39 property inquiries
- 145 permit applications
- 253 technical reviews
- 18 applications reviewed for threats to municipal drinking water
- 0 risk management plan established to protect municipal drinking water

Conservation Authorities Act: Section 28 Permits

- 216 permits
- 41 occurrence complaints
- 78 drain maintenance requests

Sewage Systems Review

- 437 permits
- 152 septic record searches
- 43 renovation reviews
- 20 occurrence reports investigated

For all planning applications, timelines are established by municipalities depending on the type of development, applicable legislation, and municipal policies.

Timelines for *Conservation Authorities Act* permits are established by the Province of Ontario. The following summary notes the number of permits issued within established timelines.

Permits Issued Within Provincial Timeline

33 Major (90 days) | **183** Minor (30 days)

Permits Issued Outside Provincial Timeline

0 Major (90 days) | **1** Minor (30 days)

In 2025, SNC continued to deliver timely service, issuing minor permits in an average of 10 days and septic permits in an average of 9 days.



Conservation Authorities: Protecting People and Property from Natural Hazards

SNC plays an important role in protecting communities from natural hazards such as flooding, erosion, and drought. Through development review, hazard mapping, watershed monitoring, emergency notifications, and water control infrastructure, SNC helps manage these risks across the watershed.

Floodplain Mapping

SNC updates floodplain and erosion hazard maps on behalf of its partner municipalities, particularly in areas experiencing increased development pressures.

In 2025, SNC updated natural hazard mapping with support from the Federal Government and partner municipalities for the following areas:

- Quaille Creek and its tributaries (City of Ottawa) – 5.1 km of watercourses; 9.2 km^2 drainage area
- Hawkesbury Creek and tributaries (Prescott-Russell) – 23 km of watercourses; 75.2 km^2 drainage area

Updated natural hazard mapping helps inform land-use planning, zoning decisions, sustainable development, and emergency preparedness to ensure communities remain safe and resilient.

Flood Forecasting

SNC continuously enhances its water resource monitoring programs to help advise municipalities and residents of potential flood emergencies and unsafe watershed conditions.

In 2025, SNC issued 19 notices under its Flood Forecasting and Warning Program for the South Nation Watershed and the Lower Ottawa River, helping municipalities, emergency responders, and residents prepare for changing watershed conditions.

Updates were also made to climate monitoring stations to support SNC's watershed model and improve forecasting capacity.

Water Control Structure Management

SNC operates several water control structures — including dams, weirs, and berms — that help regulate water levels within the watershed.

These structures also support low-flow augmentation, water supply, recreation, and the protection of fish and wildlife habitat.

Ongoing maintenance and repair are essential to safe operation. Each year, SNC submits proposals to the Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Program, supported by the Ministry of Natural Resources, to advance priority maintenance projects and technical studies that help ensure the long-term reliability of these structures.

Low Water

In August 2025, SNC declared a Level 3 (Severe) Low Water Advisory following prolonged hot and dry conditions across the watershed.

Groundwater levels declined to record lows at monitoring wells, while low-to-zero-flow conditions were observed in several watercourses. These conditions contributed to water quality concerns, including the development of Harmful Algal Blooms. SNC also received reports from residents experiencing dry or low-yielding private wells, along with impacts to agricultural operations and aquatic ecosystems.

Throughout the drought, SNC worked closely with the local Water Response Team — including municipal and provincial partners, agricultural producers, and other water users — to promote water conservation and provide guidance on water use reduction measures.

Conditions began to improve following the return of rainfall in late fall, along with snow melt and additional precipitation in early January 2026. SNC continues to monitor watershed conditions and track recovery trends.

Protecting water resources during extended dry periods remains critical to safeguarding drinking water supplies, supporting agriculture, and maintaining healthy aquatic ecosystems across the South Nation Watershed.





Bear Brook Watershed Study

In partnership with the City of Ottawa, SNC completed Phase 1 of the Bear Brook Watershed Characterization Study, the first step in a multi-year watershed planning initiative (2023–2027).

The Bear Brook watershed includes a mix of urban, rural, agricultural, and natural landscapes in eastern Ottawa and surrounding communities. As development pressures continue to grow, understanding existing watershed conditions is essential to supporting sustainable land-use planning.

The characterization work analyzed surface water and groundwater resources, flood and erosion hazards, stream conditions, water quality, natural heritage features, and land use pressures across the watershed.

Building on previous floodplain mapping, SNC completed a comprehensive watershed-scale assessment in 2025.

This work incorporated climate change considerations and examined how unstable soils influence stream behaviour and erosion processes.

The findings will improve understanding of watershed dynamics and provide decision-support tools for land-use planning, infrastructure design, emergency management, and climate adaptation.

This work provides the technical foundation for the next phase of the study, which will evaluate land-use scenarios and identify strategies to reduce flood risk and protect natural systems.

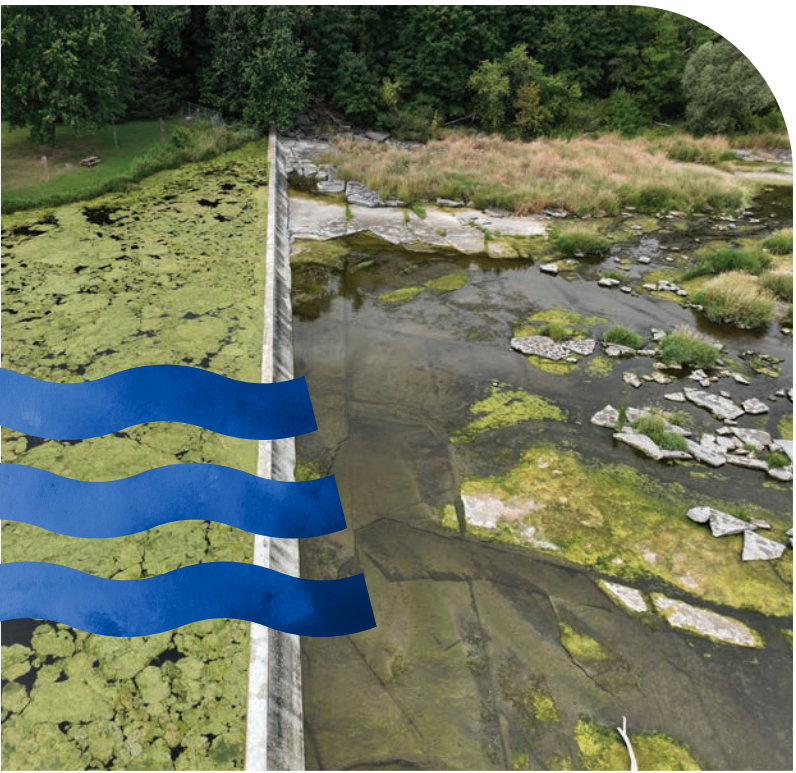
Access this online StoryMap to learn more: http://bit.ly/3MBriy6

Tracking Environmental Conditions

Watershed Monitoring and Reporting

SNC's environmental monitoring programs track the quality and quantity of land and water resources across the watershed. These programs support informed decision-making by municipalities, partners, and residents, while helping guide SNC's stewardship projects and long-term watershed planning.

SNC maintains a network of climate stations, groundwater monitoring wells, stream survey sites, and environmental monitoring locations to collect scientifically accurate data on watershed conditions. This information helps identify trends, respond to emerging concerns, and strengthen local resilience to changing environmental conditions.





Drone Technology

Drone technology continues to enhance how SNC collects environmental data across the watershed. With seven certified drone operators, staff are able to efficiently capture high-quality aerial imagery and mapping information that would have been difficult or costly to obtain in the past.

In 2025, drones supported a wide range of projects, including:

- Flood monitoring and emergency response
- LiDAR mapping of floodplains and unstable slopes
- Drought monitoring and blue-green algae mapping
- Mapping newly acquired conservation lands and invasive species
- Post-construction monitoring of wetland restoration and tree planting
- Providing aerial support to emergency services during the Morewood Bog fire
- Assisting Quinte Conservation with shoreline LiDAR mapping of the Depot Lakes in South Frontenac

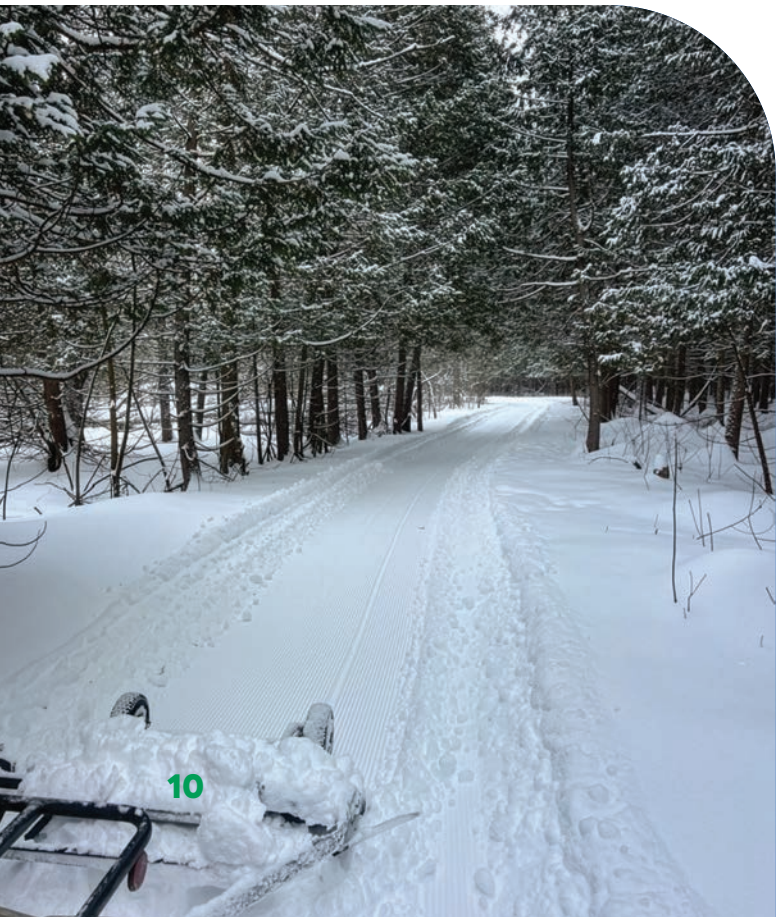
Drone technology continues to provide SNC with a safe, efficient, and cost-effective way to monitor watershed conditions and support environmental decision-making.

2025 Program *Highlights*

Endless Recreational Opportunities at SNC Conservation Areas

In 2025, SNC's network of 15 Conservation Areas welcomed over 280,000 recorded visitors, offering opportunities to hike, picnic, paddle, fish, bird watch, geocache, and enjoy the outdoors across the watershed.

Residents and visitors continued to explore SNC properties in record numbers, highlighting the importance of accessible natural spaces for recreation, wellness, and connection to nature.



Conservation Area Improvements in 2025

To enhance visitor experience and support safe, welcoming access to nature, SNC completed several park improvements throughout the year, including:

- Installation of a new dock at the Spencerville Mill
- Two new bridges and improved crossings at the Two Creeks Forest
- Continued restoration and erosion control work at J. Henry Tweed Conservation Area
- Installation of new BBQ facilities at Conservation Areas
- Paving of the entry at Jessup's Falls

In 2025, SNC also advanced its new Sign Strategy, including the design of updated gateway signage and interpretive map signs to improve wayfinding and visitor information at conservation area entrances, with installation planned for 2026.

SNC conservation areas continue to provide valued spaces for outdoor recreation, environmental education, and community connection across Eastern Ontario.



The most popular destinations?

Year-Round Sites:

W.E. Burton CA in Russell	49,514 visitors
J. Henry Tweed CA in Russell	42,034 visitors
Findlay Creek Boardwalk in the City of Ottawa	40,011 visitors
Warwick Forest CA in North Stormont	27,716 visitors

Seasonal Sites:

Jessup's Falls CA in Alfred-Plantagenet	28,554 visitors
High Falls CA in Casselman	27,997 visitors
Cass Bridge CA in North Dundas	12,603 visitors
McIntosh Park in North Stormont	12,601 visitors

Land Partnerships Support Local Economy

SNC partners with local businesses, producers, and community members to support sustainable land use and responsibly harvest locally sourced products from conservation lands. These partnerships help strengthen the rural economy while maintaining healthy forests and natural ecosystems.

MAPLE SYRUP

In 2025, 14,900 gallons of sap, a record number, was collected from the Oschmann Forest and sold to a local producer.

33 acres of land is also leased for sugar bush operations.

HUNTING

Nearly 9,000 acres of SNC land is used by hunters; 155 permits issued in 2025.

TRAPPING

Nearly 9,000 acres of land is used by trappers; 11 permits issued in 2025.

HONEY

SNC is gifted 10 lbs of honey annually from local beekeepers; 1 land lease in 2025.

CROP PRODUCTION

30 acres of SNC land is leased to local farmers.

FIRST NATIONS

Support for the "The Healing Place" and the "Miitig Healing Lodge" provide community access to public lands. Partnerships through the Eastern Ontario First Nations Working Group incorporate Traditional Knowledge and a Two-Eyed Seeing approach to conservation efforts and ensure the protection of culturally significant species.

Living Natural Legacy: SNC Land Securement

SNC's Land Securement Strategy, supported by its 16 member municipalities, continues to guide the protection of important natural areas across Eastern Ontario. Since 2014, the strategy has helped support the securement of 1,362 acres, adding to the more than 12,000 acres of land owned and managed by SNC.

The strategy identifies the ongoing need for public land securement in a rapidly changing landscape and provides a framework for recommending land acquisition decisions to SNC's Board of Directors. These conserved lands protect forests, wetlands, waterways, biodiversity, and provide opportunities for public access and recreation.

SNC is a member of the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and is approved to accept donations of land through Canada's Ecological Gifts Program.

SNC's Land Donation Program continues to offer landowners a meaningful way to preserve natural heritage and leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

In 2025, SNC acquired 228 acres across six properties through partial purchase and donation within the following municipalities:

- Augusta (145 acres)
- North Grenville (46 acres)
- The Nation (24 acres)
- Edwardsburgh-Cardinal (9 acres)
- North Stormont (2 acres)
- North Dundas (2 acres)

Through continued land securement efforts, SNC is expanding protected natural spaces and strengthening the ecological health and resilience of the South Nation Watershed.





Two Creeks Forest Restoration

Two Creeks Forest Conservation Area is one of the region's largest provincially significant coastal wetlands, where two creeks flow toward the St. Lawrence River. The site is also a popular destination for hiking and year-round outdoor recreation.

In 2025, SNC partnered with Ducks Unlimited Canada to restore wetland habitat within the Conservation Area, with funding support from Enbridge and Wildlife Habitat Canada.

The $150,000 project enhanced wetland function and created breeding habitat for migratory birds, bats, amphibians, and aquatic species, while also improving natural drainage and reducing local flood risk.

Work completed in 2025 included the creation of two new wetland ponds, resulting in 2.5 acres of new wetland habitat. Native vegetation was restored, invasive plants were removed, and drainage pathways were improved.

Tree management activities addressed dead ash trees impacted by Emerald Ash Borer, improving site safety and supporting future forest regeneration.

To enhance visitor experience, SNC also completed a new 1 km trail loop and replaced pedestrian bridges, adding to the existing 4.5 km of trails already on the property.

Additional funding has been secured to support continued habitat restoration work in 2026.







Suburban Forests and Wetlands Restored Through SNC–City Partnerships

With $285,000 in funding support from the City of Ottawa, SNC launched a series of stewardship projects in 2025 across natural lands located near growing suburban communities.

These lands, acquired through SNC's Land Securement Program, include important natural areas such as the Navan Forest, Snake Island Forest, and the Leitrim Wetland.

Work focused on improving forest and wetland health while expanding access to nearby green space for residents. Activities included habitat protection, invasive species management, and restoration efforts that support long-term ecological resilience.



Woodlot Management and Tree Planting

SNC continues to play a leading role in protecting and expanding forest cover through tree planting, sustainable forest management, and stewardship support for private landowners and municipalities.

In 2025, SNC:

- Planted over **110,120 tree seedlings**, contributing to more than **4 million trees** planted across the watershed since 1990.
- Provided **$222,748** in tree planting grants through partnership with Forests Canada to support reforestation on private land.
- Provided **$76,058** in cost-share grants to support projects on private property that helped replace 282 ash trees and manage the invasive Emerald Ash Borer.
- Completed free Woodlot Advisory Service site visits to private woodlots, providing landowners with forest management advice and stewardship guidance.
- Supported the development of Forest Management Plans and enrolment in the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) by distributing $500 grants in Prescott-Russell (UCPR) and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry (SDG).
  - In UCPR, **40 grants** supported over **1,400 acres** of forested land.
  - In SDG, **20 grants** supported over **2,200 acres** of forested land.
- Continued management of SNC forests, generating nearly:
  - **$70,000** in wood sales
  - **$16,950** in hunting permits
  - **$6,700** in maple sap sales
- Maintained forest certification under the **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)** and the **Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)**, ensuring responsible and sustainable forestry operations.
- Provided forestry services to municipalities through agreements to support park management, urban forest cover, and tree planting on public lands. In 2025, SNC supported the City of Clarence-Rockland through the development of a new tree inventory and management plan , and secured funding for 9 municipalities to add more trees to public parks.
- Worked with **18 volunteer Forest Stewards**, who helped monitor forest activity across **45 SNC properties**.
- Partnered with municipalities to provide over **10,000 free tree seedlings** to watershed residents through SNC's Forest Conservation Initiative, supported by $3,000 in local fundraising.

Through these combined efforts, SNC continues to strengthen forest resilience, enhance habitat, and support healthy landscapes across the watershed.

Clean Water Program

SNC's Clean Water Program provides cost-share support to landowners for projects that improve water quality and protect local waterways. Within the City of Ottawa, the program is delivered in partnership with the Rideau Valley, Mississippi Valley, and South Nation Conservation Authorities.

In 2025:

- **$16,990.30** in cost-share grants supported **9 projects** outside Ottawa.
- **$279,337** in cost-share grants supported **70 projects** within the City of Ottawa

Stewardship Partnerships Supporting Farmers and the Environment

Conservation Authorities are recognized globally for their watershed-based approach to protecting and restoring rivers, forests, wetlands, and agricultural landscapes.

In 2025, the Eastern Ontario Farm Stewardship Collaborative — made up of Conservation Authorities, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and other partners — began delivering the Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program: Marginal Lands Initiative.

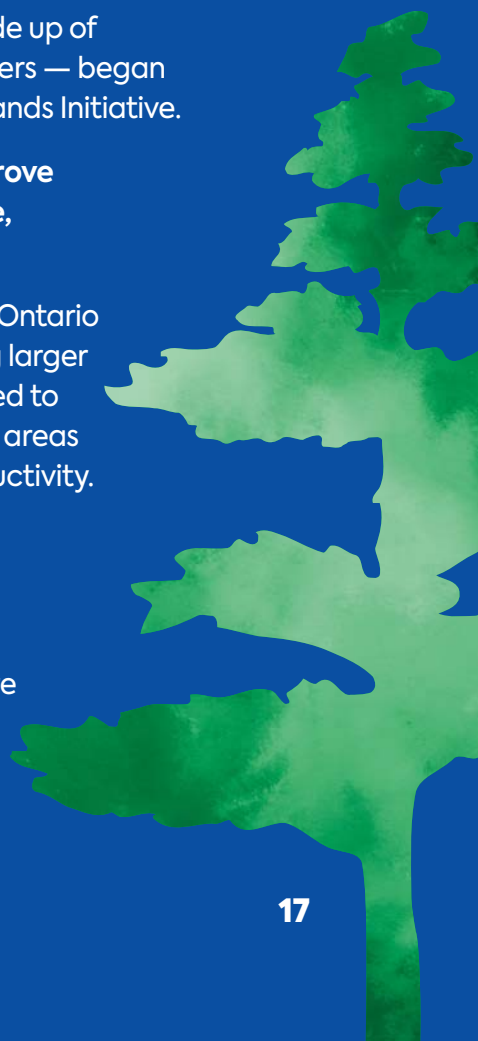
This cost-share program supports stewardship projects that improve soil and water health, restore habitat, and build climate resilience, with up to 90% of eligible costs covered.

The RALP Marginal Lands Initiative is administered by Conservation Ontario in partnership with local organizations to assist farmers undertaking larger environmental projects by offering the support and resources needed to implement meaningful changes. This initiative will improve marginal areas of farmland, fostering environmental benefits while bolstering productivity.

In 2025, $500,000 in funding was secured, with an additional $2 million committed for program delivery through 2026–2027.

Through partnerships like this, SNC continues to deliver practical, landowner-driven stewardship solutions that benefit both agriculture and the natural environment across Eastern Ontario.

This project is funded in part by the Governments of Canada and Ontario under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a five-year, federal-provincial-territorial initiative.





Proposed Changes to the Conservation Authorities Act

In 2025, the Government of Ontario posted a proposal on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO #025-1257) to amend the *Conservation Authorities Act*. The proposal includes the creation of an Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency and the consolidation of Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities into seven larger regional agencies.

SNC and Eastern Ontario municipalities submitted comments expressing concerns regarding the proposal's transparency, pace, and potential costs. The submission highlighted the importance of integrated watershed management, rural representation, effective program delivery, and opportunities for shared services.

Building Experience Through Student Employment

SNC is proud to offer summer student employment opportunities each year, recruiting more than 10 post-secondary students and recent graduates annually to gain hands-on experience in environmental conservation.

In 2025, students worked alongside staff in both field and office settings. Field placements included park maintenance, tree planting, and invasive species management, while office-based roles provided experience with mapping tools, regulatory files, and public outreach.

Through mentorship from technicians, engineers, planners, and communications professionals, students developed practical skills while learning about watershed management and the importance of protecting local natural resources.

By supporting student employment, SNC continues to help build the next generation of environmental professionals and community stewards.

Education and Outreach

In 2025, SNC continued to deliver a range of education and outreach programs designed to foster environmental stewardship and raise awareness of local conservation efforts.

These hands-on learning opportunities help youth and community members connect with the land, explore local wildlife, and better understand the importance of protecting watersheds and natural ecosystems.

Programs such as the Summer Youth Fish Camp provided opportunities for young people to learn about aquatic habitats and explore local waterways.

In 2025, over 200 youth participated in SNC education programs through camps, school visits, field trips, community events, and volunteer initiatives.

In addition, SNC supported numerous community-led initiatives through the $10,000 Community Environmental Grants Program, helping fund local environmental projects and events that strengthen shared responsibility for protecting the watershed.

Through education, outreach, and community partnerships, SNC continues to inspire the next generation of conservation leaders and support stewardship across Eastern Ontario.





2025 Board of *Directors*

- Steve Densham, Chair, Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry
- Adrian Wynands, Vice-Chair, Leeds & Grenville
- Catherine Kitts, Vice-Chair, City of Ottawa

City of Ottawa:

- Matthew Luloff, Linda Payant, Isabelle Skalski

United Counties of Prescott-Russell:

- Genevieve Lajoie, François St. Amour, Mike Tarnowski

United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry

- Bill Smirle, Tom Smyth

United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

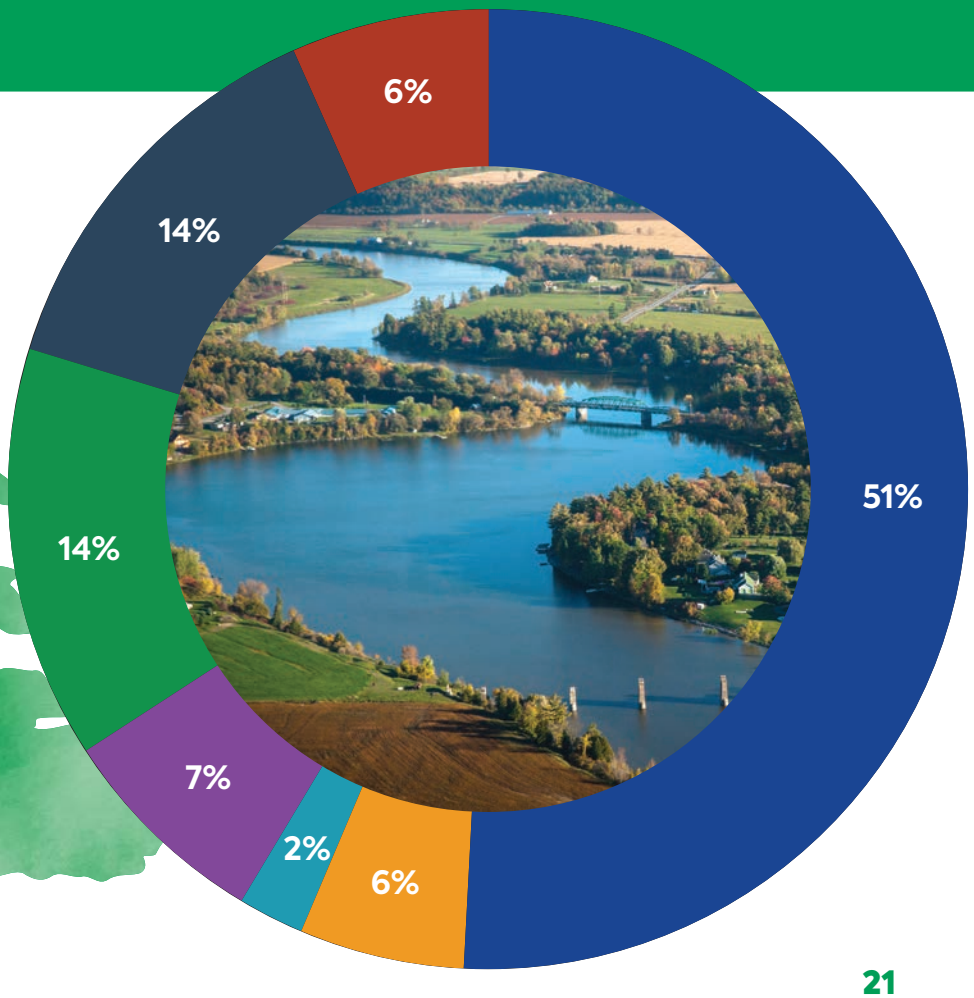
- Deb Wilson

SNC's Board of Directors consists of 13 appointed representatives from SNC's 16-member municipalities who govern and provide direction for all the work completed by SNC staff.

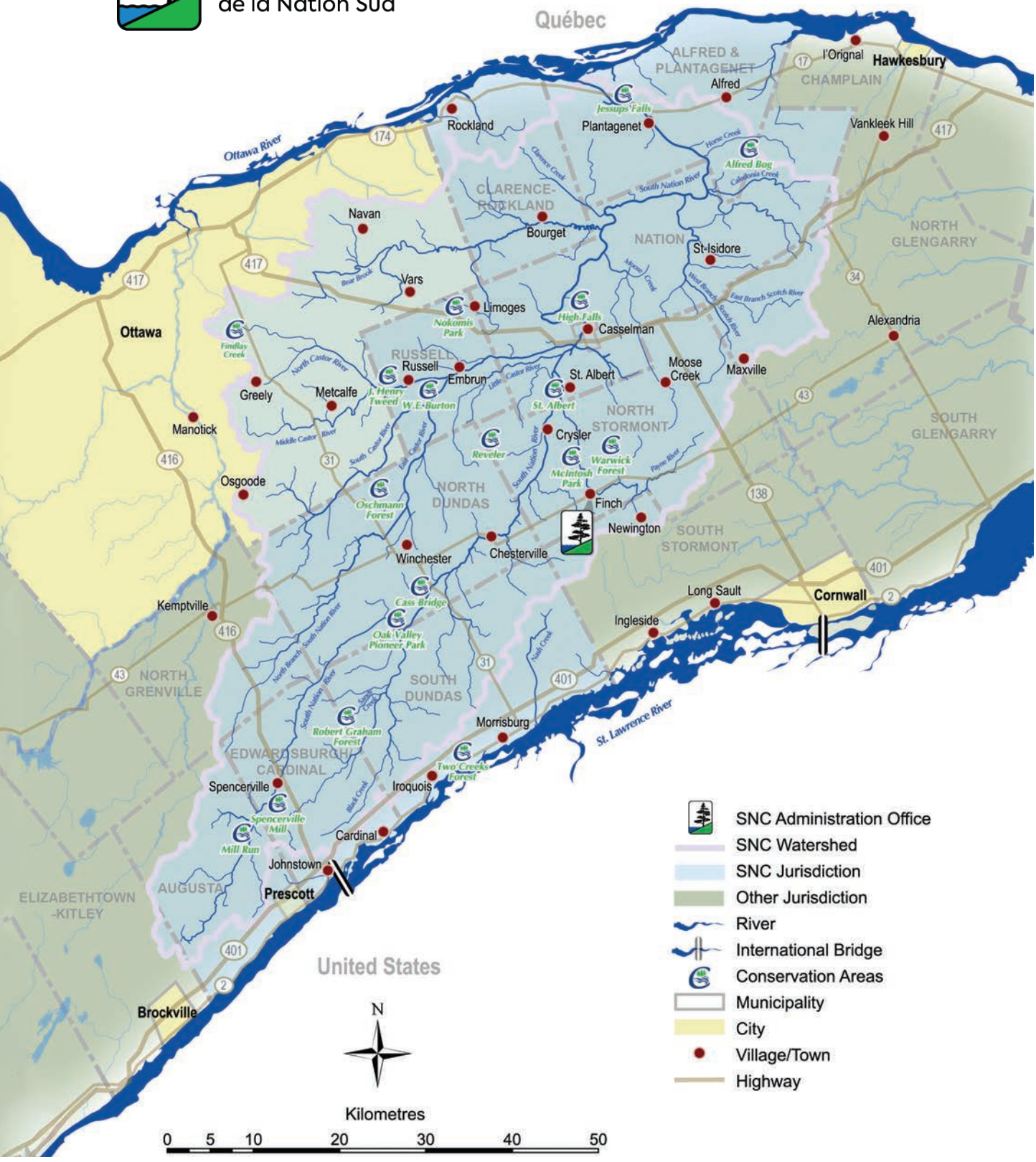
Budget *Summary*

2025 Budget: $9,080,599

- General Levy: $4,636,678
- Special Levy: $497,000
- Capital Levy: $200,000
- Government Grants: $652,457
- Partners: $1,268,619
- User Fees: $1,250,300
- Other Sources and Donations: $575,545



South Nation
Conservation
de la Nation Sud




FREE
TREES
SOUTH NATION
CONSERVATION
DE LA NATION SUD


HYPERLITE
H2O ENJOYMENT CO.





South Nation
Conservation
de la Nation Sud

38 Victoria Street
Finch, ON K0C 1K0

1.877.984.2948
info@nation.on.ca

nation.on.ca