

Sharing Responsibility for Our Water and Land WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP

Known for their watershed-based approach to managing natural resources, Conservation Authorities are also globally recognized for their stewardship of our rivers, lakes and streams through science-based programs and services.

Community involvement and partnerships are very important to the way Conservation Authorities do business. Conservation Authorities work with municipalities, provincial and federal governments, landowners, agricultural and rural organizations, environmental groups, businesses and residents. They strive to make sure that everyone is involved with either planning or delivering programs to protect our watersheds. A healthy environment is the greatest legacy we can leave our children and it is critical to the continued economic growth and prosperity in Ontario.



Conservation Authorities are THE NATURAL CHAMPIONS OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

Conservation Authorities protect, restore and manage our watersheds for now and for the future.

Most of Ontario's Conservation Authorities were created over 50 years ago to protect families and homes from floods. Today, they also provide expertise and services in:

Watershed Management
Water Quality and Water Quantity
Management
Flooding and Erosion
Afforestation
Natural Heritage
Agricultural and Rural Landowner Assistance
Environmental Education
Recreation

Almost 90 percent of Ontario's population live in a watershed managed by a Conservation Authority.



"Conservation Authorities are tested,
publicly respected and accepted organizations..."
Justice Dennis O'Connor, Walkerton Inquiry, Part II Report, 2002

Conservation Authorities are the only agencies
in Ontario structured on a watershed basis.

Conservation Authorities employ staff including biologists, ecologists, land use planners, engineers, hydrogeologists, agroscientists, foresters, hydrologists and educators. They also work with a wide network of local volunteers and are guided by Boards of Directors comprised of municipally elected and appointed officials.

Conservation Authorities vary in size from smaller operations managing one or two watersheds to larger organizations managing one sizable or several adjoining watersheds. Conservation Authorities are non governmental agencies funded mainly through self generated revenues and municipal levies with some additional funding from provincial and federal grants.



Contact your local
Conservation Authority:



CONSERVATION ONTARIO

www.conservation-ontario.on.ca info@conservation-ontario.on.ca
120 BAYVIEW PARKWAY, BOX 11, NEWMARKET, ON L3Y 4W3
TEL: 905-895-0716 FAX: 905-895-0751

Conservation AUTHORITIES

NATURAL
CHAMPIONS
for
HEALTHY
WATERSHEDS



Representing Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities
Leaders in Watershed Management

www.conservation-ontario.on.ca

WATERSHED CONNECTIONS



FORESTS

Forests moderate our climate, regulate water systems, prevent erosion, absorb carbon dioxide and provide wildlife habitat. CAs protect, manage and restore Ontario's woodlands through tree planting and woodlot management programs.

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LAKES, RIVERS AND STREAMS

Some of our drinking water comes from surface sources such as streams, rivers and lakes. The best way to ensure safe drinking water is not to contaminate these sources. Contamination often occurs through runoff from human activities.

CAs monitor and manage surface water quality and quantity as well as protect people and property from flooding and erosion.

VEGETATION

Vegetation, such as grasses, trees and shrubs, that you find beside lakes, rivers and streams is important to reduce erosion, filter out contaminants and provide habitat for fish and wildlife.

Conservation Authorities provide advice and technical expertise to landowners about the planting of buffer strips along watercourses.

WETLANDS

Wetlands are the 'workhorses' of our watersheds. They help protect the quality and supply of our groundwater by acting as a natural filter for toxic substances, providing a groundwater recharge area, preventing soil erosion and storing floodwaters. Wetlands are also a source of food and habitat for many fish and wildlife. They cannot provide these important functions if we fill them in and build on them.

Conservation Authorities improve wetland habitat, protect sensitive wetland areas and provide information to increase our understanding of wetlands.

GROUNDWATER

Groundwater is often thought of as an underground river or lake. Actually, groundwater only occurs this way in caves. It is usually stored in small spaces between soil particles or in cracks in bedrock, much like a sponge holds water.

Groundwater is easily contaminated by surface actions and because it moves so slowly, it takes a long time for pollution to appear. Because of this, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to clean up.

Conservation Authorities monitor the quality and quantity of groundwater supplies as well as promote good watershed stewardship practices to prevent contamination of groundwater sources.

RUNOFF

Contaminants travel over land and paved areas such as roads and parking lots, washing directly into surface and groundwater sources especially after heavy rains or during snowmelt.

Conservation Authorities deliver watershed education programs to inform people about healthy practices.

A watershed is an area of land that is drained by a river or a stream and its tributaries to a body of water such as a lake or ocean.

WATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS

If you live in a more urban area, your water is treated at a water treatment system. However, not all contaminants can be removed and it is very expensive to clean up our water. It makes more sense to keep our surface and groundwater clean at their sources.

Conservation Authorities promote source water protection.

Everyone lives downstream in a watershed

Your watershed is made up of different ecosystems that are interconnected and impact on the quality and quantity of our drinking water sources. These ecosystems include: wetlands, forests, rivers, lakes streams, and wildlife. Our lifestyles have the biggest impact of all on our watershed ecosystems.

Conservation Authorities provide expertise and programs to find balanced, sustainable approaches to meet our environmental, human and economic needs.

Why Protect our Sources of Water?

Source protection means keeping our rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands and groundwater healthy. All these sources of water are linked in a watershed and everything we do ultimately impacts the health of our watersheds. Rather than always relying on expensive technology to clean our water, let's make sure we take the first step to prevent contamination and protect our sources of drinking water.

Natural Champions

Conservation Authorities are local, science-based environmental organizations that manage Ontario's natural resources on a watershed basis together with landowners, government, and other partners.

www.conservation-ontario.on.ca

