
Catfish Creek Conservation Authority

Strategic Plan

2019 - 2023



MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIRPERSON AND GENERAL MANAGER / SECRETARY TREASURER

On behalf of the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA), we are pleased to present our new five-year Strategic Plan, which identifies our priorities for 2019 – 2023.

Our organization was established in 1950, and we have been providing services to our municipalities and residents for almost 70 years. Our new strategy builds on previous successes and accomplishments, while moving us forward so we can modernize how we operate. This will allow us to be more responsive to changing watershed conditions and economic factors.

Our strategic plan 2019 – 2023 responds to feedback obtained from watershed residents, stakeholders, municipal partners, and Board Members. We reached out broadly, using meetings and an online survey. Throughout the consultations we heard what we do is very important for the residents we serve. We heard that we should be enhancing our opportunities for the public to connect with our natural environment, for example expanding our outdoor education programs. We also heard that we should be ensuring good value for the taxpayer through sustainable recreational experiences.


While this plan is responsive to new threats, we remain focused on our traditional mandates to protect people and property from natural hazards, improving the ecological health of the watershed, curate and foster an appreciation of the natural environment by connecting people with nature, ensure our conservation lands are well managed, and finally a commitment to operate a sustainable and adaptable organization.

As we move forward over the next five years, this plan will provide a road map to build on and enhance our business through improvements to our recreation and watershed services. We are committed to serving our community, and believe this plan will have a positive impact both within our organization and on the residents.

Sincerely,

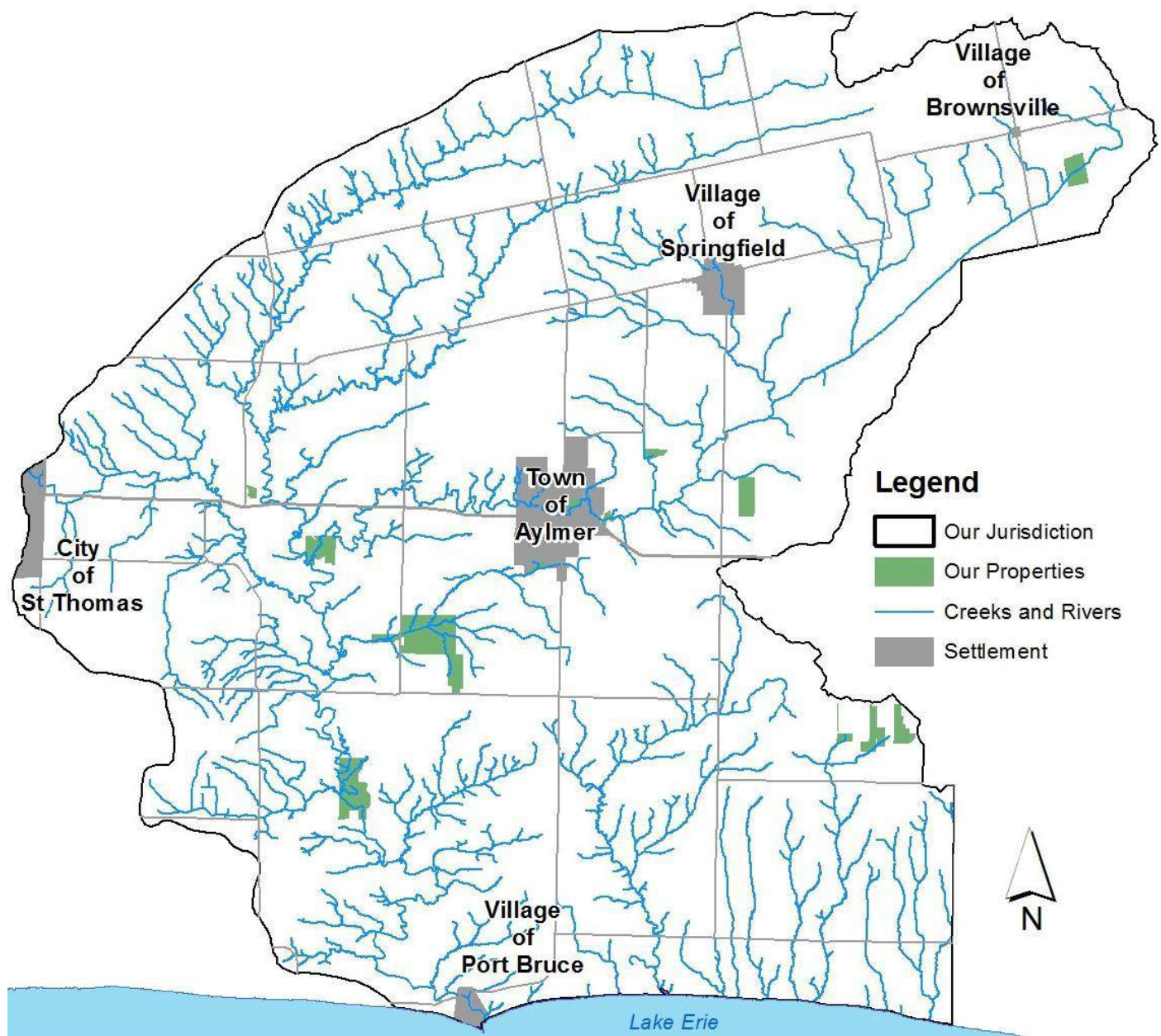


RICK CERNA
CCCA Chairperson



CHRISTOPHER WILKINSON
General Manager / Secretary Treasurer

OUR WATERSHED



QUICK FACTS



Total Area
490 Sq Km



Population
21,000+



Natural Areas
134 Sq Km
or 27%



Agriculture
346 Sq Km
or 71%



Settlement
10 Sq Km
or 2%

OUR VISION / MISSION

To communicate and deliver resource management services and programs in order to achieve social and ecological harmony for the watershed

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Protect life and minimize property damage from flooding and erosion
2. Improve the ecological health of the Catfish Creek watershed
3. Curate an appreciation for nature
4. Ensure our conservation lands are protected and enhanced
5. Operate a sustainable and adaptable organization

OUR CORPORATE VALUES

Committed

We are committed to conservation and work every day to improve the health and function of the Catfish Creek watershed and to provide the outdoor recreation opportunities and customer service that the community expects from us.

Proud

We are proud of our watershed and are proud to dedicate ourselves to the protection of the watershed. We work hard to increase the natural spaces so that future generations can also be proud of the watershed.

Compassionate

We are compassionate with landowners and we understand both their interests and those of a changing environment. We have a great history of working with landowners to find solutions that work for all parties.

Creative

We are creative in our solutions and we understand the challenges of today's economy. We are committed to being creative and adaptive in our business solutions to ensure we are a sustainable organization for another 70 years.



Strategic Priority #1

Protect Life & Minimize Property Damage from Flooding and Erosion

Hundreds of watershed residents still live and operate businesses within floodplains, in particular within the Town of Aylmer, and the Villages of Springfield and Port Bruce. Built infrastructure such as the Springwater Dam are operated to mimic the natural flow of the creek. Due to the observed increased variability of climate and high Lake Erie water levels, the risk of ice jams and shoreline erosion remains.



Strategic Actions

- Continue to develop our municipal flood forecasting and warning partnerships and increase our capacity to better anticipate and predict Flood Events
- Refine our monitoring network and build capacity around data management tools and our flood operations center to ensure effective water quantity decision making
- Continue to monitor, assess, and map natural hazards to further our detailed understanding of riverine and shoreline processes
- Commit to maintaining our quick turnaround time for all permits and inquiries
- Further streamline our planning services to ensure, among other things that the public is able to search the internet for areas of development constraint related to natural hazards



Strategic Priority #2

Improve the Ecological Health of the Catfish Creek Watershed

Our focus is on improving the ecological health of the watershed and restore its aquatic & terrestrial features. Municipalities partner with us to deliver environmental services on their behalf. Since 2012, we have created over 50 acres of woodlots, 50 acres of wetlands, 50 acres of tall grass prairies, and have protected and restored over 1,300 m of creek banks from erosion. We also work with Provincial and Federal partners to monitor and implement projects that improve water quality, in particular working to reduce phosphorous and other nutrients from entering Lake Erie.



Strategic Actions

- Engage landowners and all levels of government regarding funding programs to reduce nutrient loads in streams, rivers, and Lake Erie
- Using the best science & information such as CCCA Watershed Plans & other Community based Natural Heritage Restoration Plans, to work with landowners to restore the natural environment through the implementation of targeted stewardship projects that restore natural areas
- In partnership with Municipal partners, work towards a “Greening Strategy” to manage the current loss of Ash and Elm trees, the future loss of Beech trees, and to increase forest cover and other habitats (ex. prairie, wetlands) over time
- Work in collaboration with partners to promote best management practices such as tree planting, cover crops, and other initiatives which ultimately improve water quality and reduce nutrient loading into our creek and lake

Strategic Priority #3

Curate an appreciation for nature

The Catfish Creek watershed is home to over 21,000 watershed residents whose health and well-being can benefit from our passive recreational opportunities. We also provide environmental education through our outdoor education programs which, in 2018, saw over 1,500 residents participating in our outdoor activities such as snowshoeing and guided nature hikes in our five Conservation Areas. As a large landowner within the Carolinian Life Zone, we want to share our unique brand of nature with residents as well as visitors from outside our watershed and deliver programs to educate and provide passive recreational opportunities to youth and the general public.



Strategic Actions

- Provide recreational and educational opportunities using a sustainable and balanced approach
- Commit to deliver a financially sustainable nature/outdoor education program that is mobile, hands-on, and interactive
- Complete an infrastructure deficit report in order to develop future budgets in terms of re-investments required in our Conservation Areas and updates to our business plan and campground expansion plan
- Research and promote the history of the Springwater Conservation Area, in particular the East Campground which includes the School House, Arboretums, pond, and boardwalk
- Enhance our social media presence to promote our organization, events, public consultation opportunities and natural watershed assets
- Gain a better understanding of our customers to enhance and refine our services, and to improve customer satisfaction

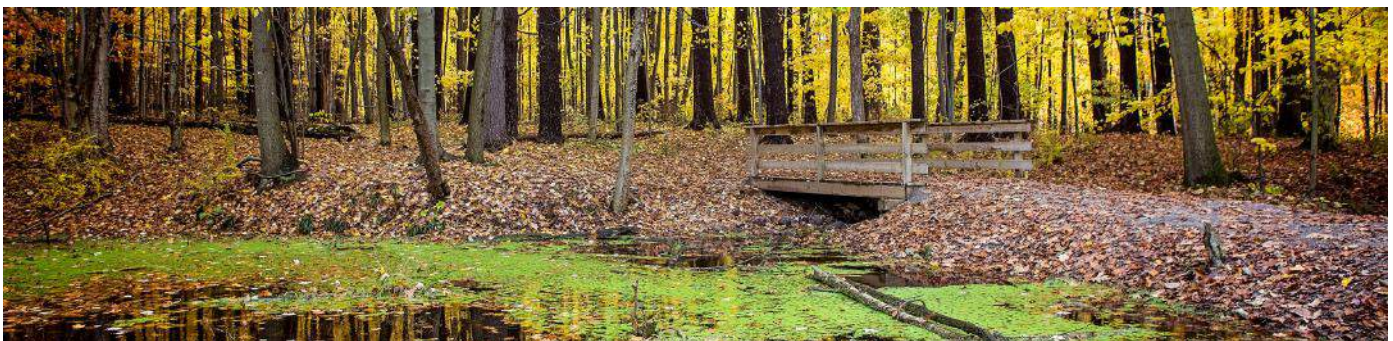
Strategic Priority #4

Ensure our Conservation Lands are protected and enhanced

As of 2018, CCCA has acquired a total of 1,300 acres of land making us the largest public landowner in the watershed. In addition to our two Conservation Areas, we own protected natural areas with limited public access, urban parkland maintained by the Town of Aylmer, and several rural properties.

Strategic Actions

- Balance ecology and the economy in decisions related to conservation lands
- Ensure the long term sustainability of our natural spaces
- Update our Conservation Lands Management Plans to ensure we manage our natural spaces in an ecologically sound manner
- Acquire and dispose of properties to balance the management of our organization to meet our core mandate, and also to help meet our ecological objectives
- Engage in Wildlife Management partnerships where feasible to ensure human-wildlife interactions are minimized and to maximize species at risk and sensitive plant species recovery



Strategic Priority #5

Operate a sustainable and adaptable organization

We are a very adaptable organization with a history of exceptional quality and customer service for an organization our size. We need to continue being efficient over the next five years in order to ensure we remain sustainable. Customer Service is important to us and we value the relationships we have developed in our community over time.



Strategic Actions

- Integrate the observed changes in climate variability into our natural resources programs to mitigate the impact of flooding and low water
- Further diversify our business model to result in an increased ratio of self-generated revenue compared with tax-supported revenue
- Enhance existing and develop new partnerships with those that share similar values, such as local interest groups, academia, government, and the private sector
- Review current policies and processes to strengthen financial controls and reduce exposure to risk (e.g. long range capital and operating budgets)
- Create a longer term business plan and agreements to streamline municipal levy process and increase transparency
- Conduct routine evaluations of program and staff performance and report on outcomes to drive improvements
- Improve relationships with our municipal partners through regular communication with council and staff
- Create a social media strategy to promote our events and share our natural assets
- Implement a formal fundraising program through the establishment of a Foundation
- Monitor and report at least annually on the progress of implementing this strategic plan

NEXT STEPS

The 2019-2023 Catfish Creek Strategic Plan has been completed to highlight our five strategic priorities and associated actions. This plan will guide our annual work planning process over the next five years, and resources will be allocated accordingly. We will always demonstrate how a new or enhanced program or service fits with our strategic plan. Finally, we will ensure that our programs and services remain relevant and adaptive to changing economic and environmental conditions.



Photo By: Barry Acheson

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Thank you to our member municipalities:

Town of Aylmer

Township of Malahide

City of St. Thomas

Municipality of Central Elgin

Township of South West Oxford
