

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following individuals and groups for assisting in the preparation of the Springwater Master Plan:

- Board Members and Member Municipalities for their continued support of the Conservation Areas program.
- Previous and Current Staff for their Plans, input and suggestions.
- Community members are thanked for providing donations to support the maintenance of the forest infrastructure and their public input.
- Partners such as Birds Studies Canada, Canadian Chestnut Council, the Aylmer District Trappers Council (ADTC), the Aylmer Malahide Museum & Archives, and the Universities of Western and Guelph for their continued research projects in the forest which will help ensure its environmental sustainability for years to come.

Master Plan Summary

Before Springwater Conservation Area was created, its value as a significant natural resource was widely recognized by naturalists, conservationists, and the community.

Springwater: This beautiful pond on Bradley Creek is one of the loveliest spots on the Catfish Watershed. The pond itself is over a quarter mile long and surrounded by magnificent woodland. The woods are one of the few unspoiled areas of Southern Ontario and here may be seen majestic oaks, pines and maples standing in all their primitive splendour as they have done for three hundred years and more. This pond and the land surrounding it are the greatest assets of the Catfish Watershed for they not only provide recreational facilities such as swimming, boating, fishing and nature study, but are a very important source of water to the stream itself. The magnificent woods, too, could be made, under proper forest management, a great source of revenue from the sale of timber. ¹

A.H. Richardson, Chief Conservation Engineer, 1951

Thanks to the former owner of the property, Fred White, this tract of land remains one of the few large upland forested areas left in South-Western Ontario.

When the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority purchased the “White’s Bush” in 1963, its members fully recognized its potential for outdoor recreation, but concern for the protection and wise management of the natural features was of primary importance. By 1965, the original Master Plan for the Conservation Area had been prepared to guide development of the property and many of the concepts contained within it have been utilised. By 1983, an updated Master Plan was prepared by Mark Snowsell with contributions from Mr. Kim Smale. In 1990, a revised master plan was prepared which provided an update to the management practices and prices for development. In 1996, 15 years after the Master Plan was updated, an Interim Operational Land Management Plan was developed by Mr. Kim Smale with contributions from Ed Pietrzak, Conservation Areas Supervisor and the Ministry of Natural Resources Aylmer District staff.

¹ AH Richardson 1951. Catfish Creek Conservation Report, Department Of Planning And Development, Toronto.

The preparation of an updated Master Plan is required to guide development at the Conservation Area in a series of phases over the next 20-year period. Review of the Master Plan should be take place annually so that the goals and objectives can be evaluated and new development concepts considered. Highlights of the 2020-2040 Springwater Conservation Area Master Plan are as follows:

1. A series of development projects that relate to the Authority's strategic plan related to ensuring our organization is sustainable by improving, upgrading and renovating existing facilities at Springwater Conservation Area. These include campground expansions and enhancements anticipated to generate additional revenue to deliver on our mission/vision and to generate revenue which will offset the costs to deliver Provincially Mandated Programs. Development projects are outlined in four five year phases commencing in 2020 and continuing through 2040.
2. Enhancements are proposed that relate to the Authority's strategic plan related to Curating an Appreciation for Nature. These include a summer camp, enhanced program activities for school groups and adult learners, and enhanced educational opportunities.
3. Operational criteria that relate to the Authority's strategic plan related to Protecting Life & Minimizing Property Damage from Flooding and Erosion. This includes managing the dam for flood control and managing erosion in and access to the incised valleys found in Springwater.
4. Improving the Ecological Health of the Catfish Creek by improving the water quality.
5. Acquisition of adjacent lands would provide opportunities to further promote conservation practices such as woodlot management, erosion control, fish and wildlife management, passive recreation and/or the protection of hazard lands.

Development costs contained in the four phases have been estimated at \$2,100,000.

Introduction

The Springwater Conservation Area Master Plan is a comprehensive and strategic document created to protect, conserve and restore the valuable ecological features and functions associated with the Springwater Conservation Area while guiding the current and potential future public uses of the Conservation Area. The Springwater Conservation Area Master Plan is intended to provide a vision of what is possible and motivate partners and supporters to assist Catfish Creek Conservation Authority in realizing that vision. This Master Plan will guide the management and use of Springwater Conservation Area until 2040.

The Springwater Conservation Area Master Plan will help us to:

- Identify a clear and agreed-upon set of goals for Springwater Conservation Area
- Streamline and focus decision making
- Allow human and fiscal resources to be accurately and appropriately aligned with identified priorities
- Develop a forward-looking and forward-thinking vision for Springwater Conservation Area
- Ensure Springwater Conservation Area continues to meet the needs of our watershed and community.

Catfish Creek Conservation Authority has not undertaken a significant review of Springwater Conservation Area programming in more than twenty years. Since that time public use of Springwater

Conservation Area has increased dramatically, while new and different approaches to outdoor recreation and education have emerged. The Conservation Area requires new infrastructure investments to support the increase in users and changing demographics of the users. Outputs such as potential land acquisitions identified from this detailed Management Plan will be considered through CCCA's recently approved Lands Acquisition and Disposal Policies².

CCCA's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan recognizes the importance of Springwater by ensuring conservation lands are protected and enhanced. In addition, the Township of Malahide is updating its Integrated Community Sustainability Plan called Cultivating Malahide and guides future development of our communities to support future growth (population, infrastructure and economic) while protecting the environment and addressing important local needs.

The Springwater Conservation Area Master Plan is anticipated to be approved by the Board of Directors in 2021. The Master Plan will be used by the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority Board of Directors to make decisions about priorities, and it will be used as a tool to align staff and fiscal resources with the identified priorities.

Background

Prior to its purchase on June 19th, 1963, White's Bush, as it was known by area residents was the property of Fred D. White. Fortunately, it was Mr. White's desire to maintain his land in a natural state. Late in life, Mr. White attempted to sell this tract of land to anyone who would ensure its preservation but it was not until a year after he died that the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority purchased the property in sections. The 1963 purchase included Springwater Forest and pond, a one-acre section north of Malahide Concession Road 6, and land now occupied by the campground and administration office. Jaffa Tract was acquired in 1964, and the one-acre section containing the old schoolhouse was purchased in 1965.

Realizing its obvious potential for providing a wide variety of outdoor recreational opportunities for area residents, the Authority engaged Canadian Mitchell Associates Limited to prepare a Master Development Plan for Springwater in 1964-65. In August of 1965, the Plan was completed. It contained guidelines for a four phase development of areas for camping, hiking, boating, picnicking, recreation and nature appreciation.

Since 1965, many of the development proposals were incorporated such as the development of the beach area, construction of new washroom and shower facilities, and addition of new campsites. Development projects over the past twenty years have not been particularly large scale but focused on enhanced recreational opportunities such as an accessible trail and fishing platforms, and facility upgrades such as accessibility improvements to the Community Room used for Pancakes at the Maple Syrup Festival. Further details of capital projects completed over the past 15 years are provided below in Table 1.

² <https://www.catfishcreek.ca/about-us/publications/>

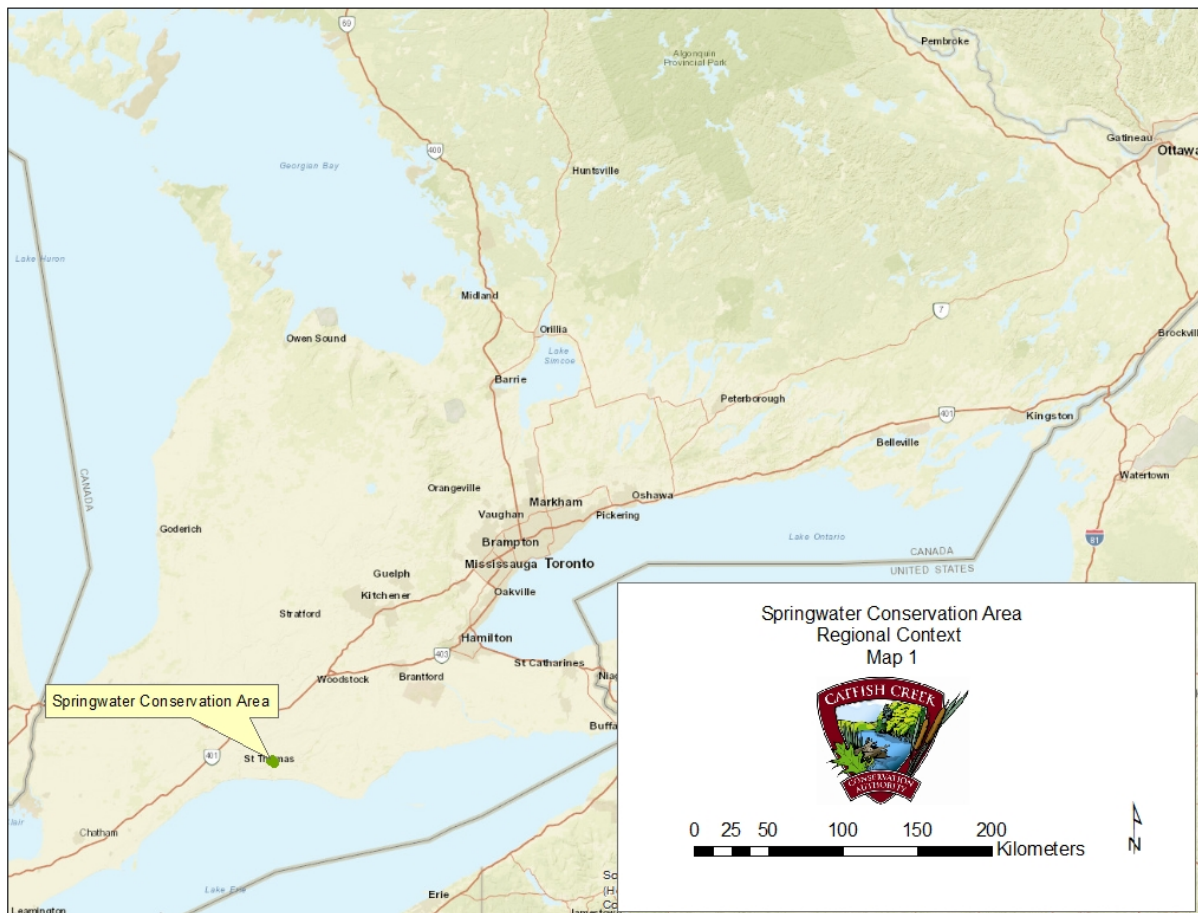
Table 1: List of Capital Development Projects since 2005

| Year | Description |
|-------------|--|
| 2005 | Seasonal Pavilion Construction |
| 2007 | Pine Ridge Washroom Roof |
| 2009 | Beach Washroom Expansion and Solar Panels |
| 2010 | South Pavilion Roof |
| 2011 | Pavilion Washroom Field Bed Repairs |
| 2012 | West Campground Hydro/ Water Group Camping Expansion |
| 2012 | Boardwalk Repair and Resurfacing |
| 2012 | Dam Safety Refurbish |
| 2013 | Accessible Trail |
| 2015 | West Campground Poplar Hill Washroom Expansion |
| 2017 | Observation Platform Resurfacing |
| 2018 | Bridge Reconstruction Between Bradley Creek and Lower Pine |
| 2018 | Community Room / Shop Accessible |
| 2019 | Electrical Upgrades West Campground |
| 2019 | Water and Sewage Pump Upgrades |
| 2021 | Visitor Centre and enhanced security (automated gates) |
| 2021 | Education / Music Stage |

Regional Context

Springwater is located in eastern Elgin County and situated in the South-central part of the Catfish Creek watershed. It also lies in the heart of the Deciduous Forest Region and the Norfolk Sand Plain physiographic region. Other significant public recreation lands in the region include Port Stanley beach (25 km to the South West), Port Bruce Provincial Park (15 km to the south), Long Point Provincial Park (60 km to the southeast), Dalewood Conservation Area (15km to the northwest) and Lake Whittaker Conservation Area (25km to the north). Refer to Map 1.

Figure 1: Regional Context Map (Map 1)

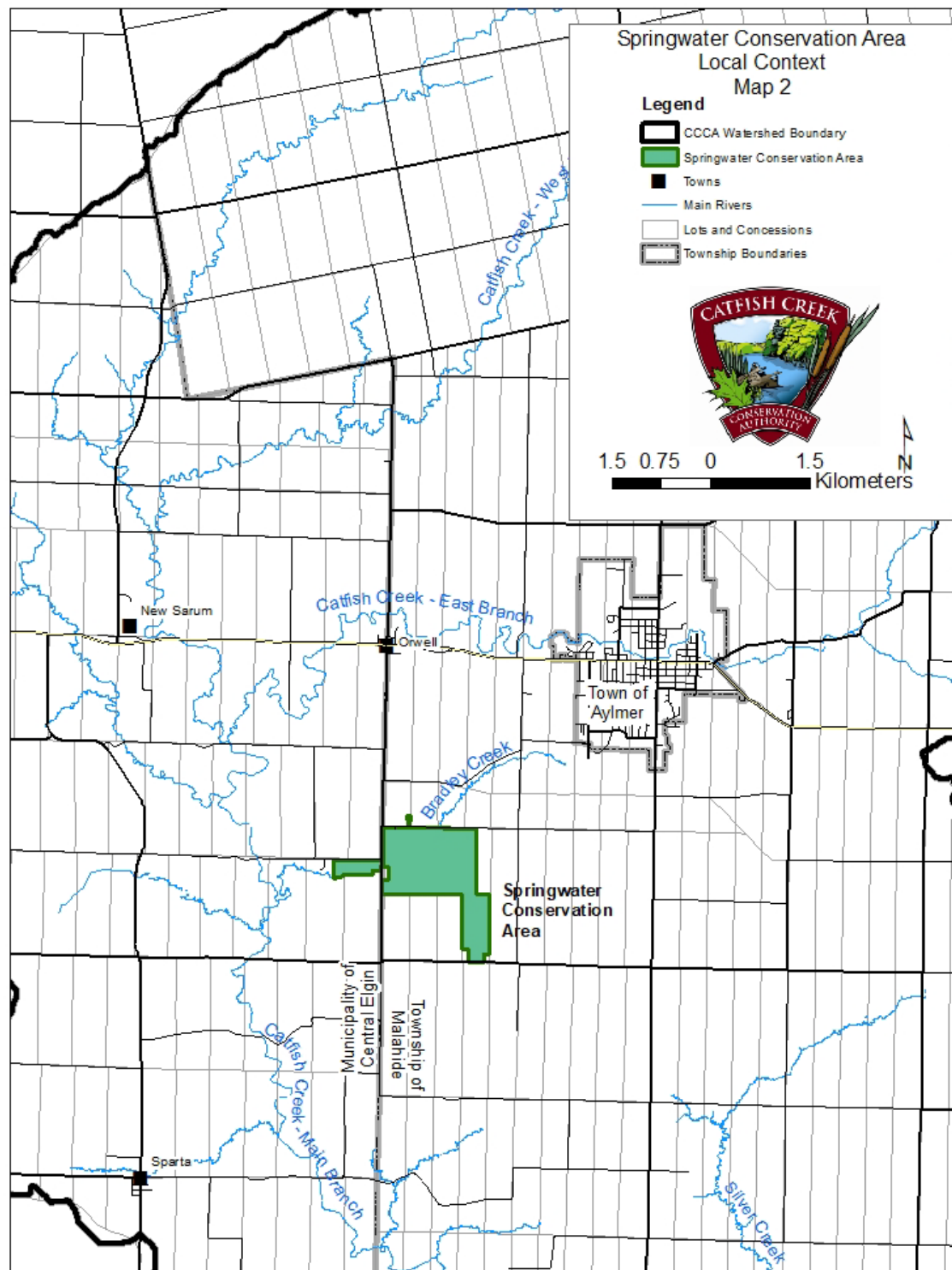


Lying within a region devoted largely to agriculture land use, Springwater, with its vast maple-beach-oak upland forest, is a valuable remnant of the landscape settlers observed when they first arrived in the area in the 1800's.

Local Context

Springwater Conservation Area is situated three kilometers south of Highway #3 from Orwell on Elgin County Road 35 (Springwater Road) between Aylmer and St. Thomas. The property is split across two townships. The administration building and seasonal camping sections are on Lot 28, Concession 6, Municipality of Central Elgin, while the pond, day-use area and forest are located within parts of Lots 1-4, Concession 5 in Malahide Township. Refer to Map 2.

Figure 2: Local Context (Map 2)



Access

There is easy access by vehicle to Springwater Conservation Area from various parts of the province. Highway #3 is three kilometers to the north and is the main east-west artery between Tillsonburg and St. Thomas. This highway has several links with Highway 401 including Highway 73 (Elgin Road).

Alternatively, County Road 45 (John Wise Road) is a common tourist route between St. Thomas and Long Point and is only two kilometers to the south of the Conservation Area. Springwater Road splits the park and joins both Highway #3 to the north and Highway #45 to the south. Refer to Maps 1 and 2.

Size

Springwater Conservation Area includes the camping areas, day-use areas, the pond and Agreement Forest covering 462 acres. The various properties that make up Springwater Conservation Area are as follows:

Table 2: List of properties that make up Springwater Conservation Area

| Property | Address | Acreage |
|---|---|----------------|
| Forest, Day-Use Area, Beach & Schoolhouse | 47719 Conservation Line, Malahide | 343.97 |
| Springwater Forest North Parcel | 47719 Conservation Line, Malahide | 0.91 |
| Jaffa Tract | 48278 John Wise Line, Malahide | 93 |
| Administration Building and Campground | 8079 and 8059 Springwater Road, Central Elgin | <u>23.5</u> |
| | | 461.38 |

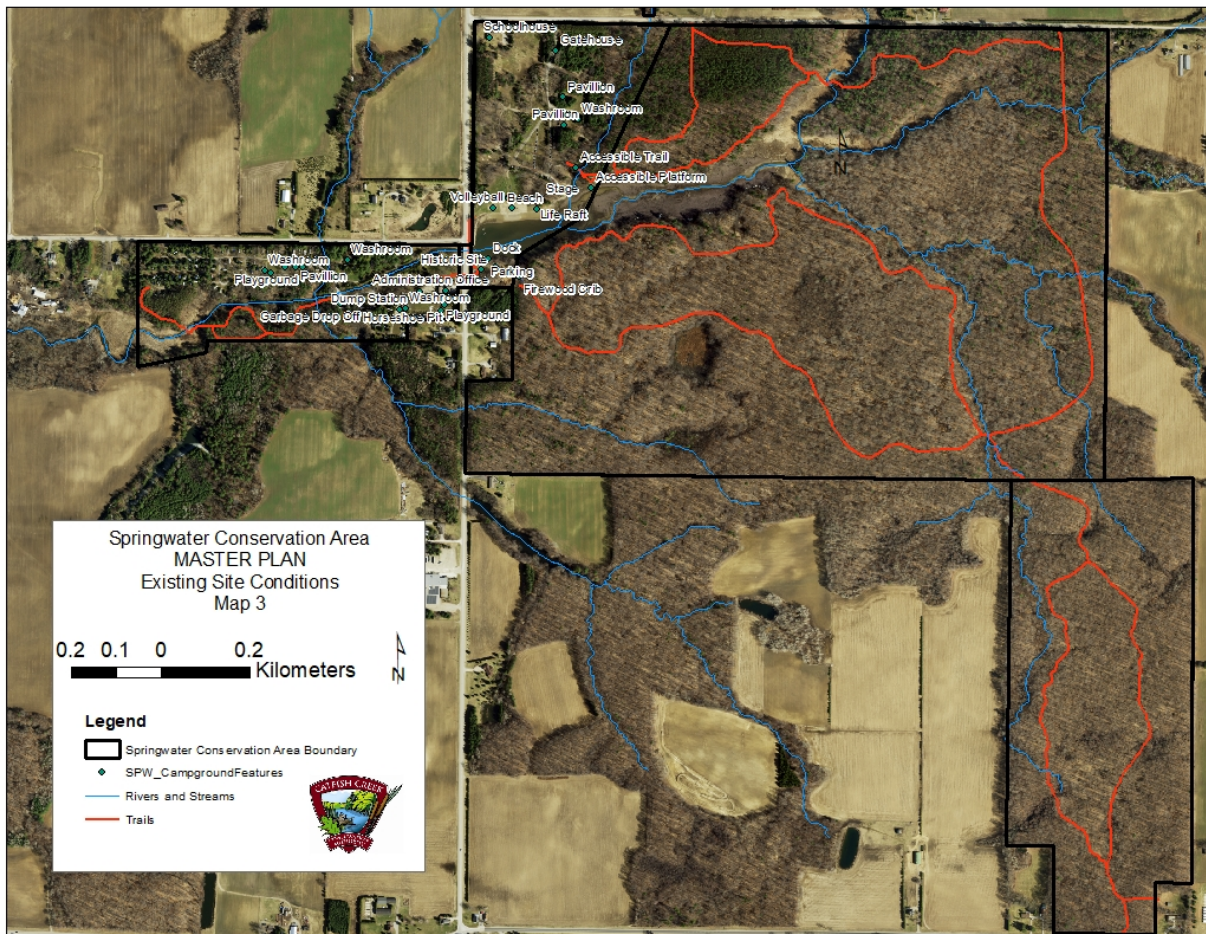
Existing Land Use

Springwater provides numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation. As noted above, 23.5 acres is devoted to a seasonal campground. The day use area provides facilities for transient camping, picnicking, fishing, hiking, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, wildlife viewing, outdoor classrooms, and entertainment.

The reservoir is used for various water based activities such as fishing, swimming, canoeing and kayaking, but also used to retain silt from making upstream deposits and to mitigate the Bradley Creek floodwater contribution to Catfish Creek.

The forest areas are used for wildlife viewing, outdoor recreation (hiking, wildlife viewing, skiing), a source of revenue from timber, habitat enhancement from fallen trees, a research centre for academic research into tree diseases, and the mitigation of floods through the retention and slowing down of rain waters. Other functions of the forest include food supply for various fauna, air filtration to sequester Carbon Dioxide, wind reduction, temperature modification, and education.

Figure 3: Existing Land Use (Map 3)



Adjacent Land Use

A very large proportion of the land around Springwater is used for intensive agriculture, in particular tobacco and corn production.

Based on a 2km analysis boundary, 65% of land around Springwater is cultivated for general field crops and used as orchards. Map 4 illustrates the adjacent land uses and dominance of agricultural land uses.

The next largest proportion of land at 29% is wooded and vegetation. The remaining lands consist of Rural and Farm Residential (5%) and Commercial (1%).

Figure 4: Adjacent Land Uses (Map 4)

