

Water Quality Monitoring

Throughout the province, Conservation Authorities have developed standardized approaches to sampling and monitoring stream health. Fish and aquatic communities are one of the key indicators providing a means of communicating the health of local watersheds to residents. Fish and aquatic communities continually adjust to changing chemical, physical and biological parameters in streams. Different fish species have adapted in different ways to tolerate or adjust to environmental factors in their habitats.

Several program partnerships with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, depend on water quality data collected by the CCCA. The Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network (PWQMN) and the Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network (PGMN) support CCCA and our partners to monitor the changing watershed conditions and facilitate data-lead management of our water resources. 2022 surface water (PWQMN) sampling began in April and ended in November with four (4) sites sampled each month. Groundwater quality (PGMN) samples and groundwater measurements were collected from four (4) wells in the month of November.

Water Management

Fresh water is a natural resource crucial to the environmental and economic well-being of the Catfish Creek watershed. Agriculture activities, industrial development, and recreation all rely on this natural resource.

Historically, periods of extreme weather patterns were uncommon and excessive water levels were relatively infrequent. As average surface temperatures increase, demand for water increases as climate changes occur severe water level fluctuations are becoming more common.

Commonly, changes in climate conditions are expected to include general warming, decreased snow cover, increases in the number of temperature extremes and an increase in the intensity of localized precipitation. These climate change conditions are expected to adversely affect local communities through increased flooding, and longer durations of low water conditions. The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) tries to mitigate the impacts of water quantity conditions due to climate change through water management activities such as flood forecasting and low water response.

CCCA monitors and maintains a series of hydrometric stations within the Catfish Creek watershed, and utilizes neighbouring watershed stations to monitor and extrapolate water levels and forecast channel flows. This information is used to notify CCCA member municipalities and residents of potential floods and low water conditions.

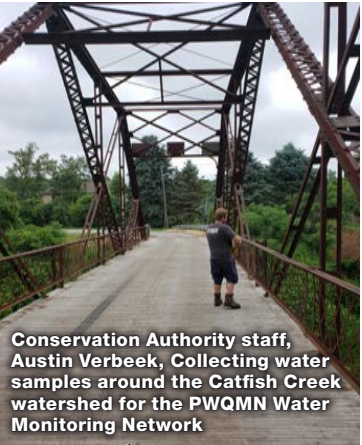
The goal of the CCCA Flood Forecasting and Warning System is to provide Watershed Condition Statements for flood advisories and warnings to

Communications

This year we were thrilled to be able to enjoy a camping season without restrictions at Springwater Conservation Area. We were able to open up all of the CCCA's amenities and run all events at full capacity. We focused our social media channels for advertising the many amenities and events Springwater Conservation Area has to offer. Staff saw many followers interact with our posts by "Liking and Sharing" our advertisements. We used our social media channels to pass along information regarding programs the Conservation Authority partakes in for example, Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network (PWQMN), Source Water Protection, and Conservation Ontario's Healthy Hikes Campaign. Facebook and Instagram has been a great informative tool for the surrounding area community and for those farther away to stay informed on important information happening at Springwater Conservation Area and within the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority's watershed boundaries.

Our social media channels for both Facebook and Instagram has a following of users from all over Southwestern Ontario, with some from all over the world. The top cities in which our followers live are: St. Thomas, London, Aylmer, Springfield and Toronto. For the year of 2022, we saw an audience increase of 54.7% resulting in 66,133 people reached on Facebook. Our top performing organic post on Facebook was an advertisement about the 2022 Christmas Spirit Walk which we were delighted to bring back for the first time since the pandemic. Our most popular post on Instagram was a post detailing the new Springwater Conservation Area walking trails signs, in partnership with STEAM Learning Centre, Fanshawe College,

Aquatic and water quality data collected by CCCA during sampling is used to track changes in the numbers and diversity of aquatic communities in various streams throughout the watershed. Staff sample at 11 benthic locations throughout the watershed identified numerous species of fish and other aquatic habitat species. This information, along with the monitoring of other environmental indicators such as forest cover, water quality and quantity, will support and develop future management practices and conservation programs.



member municipalities and government agencies, during times of flood threats. Based on watershed conditions, the appropriate flood message is sent to the municipalities whose responsibility is to respond and ensure the safety of their residents.

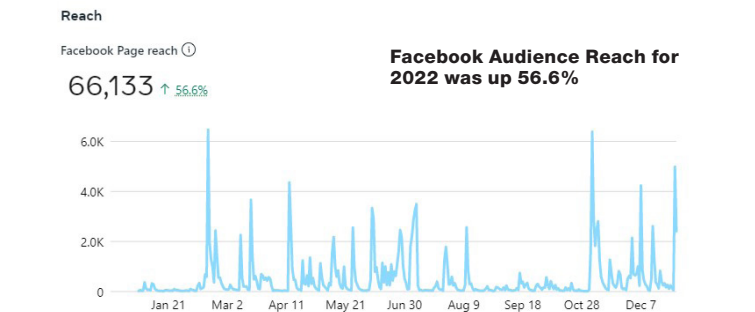
The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) monitors surface water quality and quantity relying on representatives from local water user groups, member municipalities, farmers / landowners, recreation users, industry and government agencies for guidance and experience in their respective capacities. Within the realm of the Provincial and Local Low Water Response Plan, the Conservation Authority makes a decision on the appropriate measures and conservation actions regarding low water conditions.

The CCCA works closely with the Ministry of Natural Resources to deliver effective Low Water Response and Flood Forecasting and Warning Programs. Water level condition reporting is the use of real-time information to calculate channel flow rates and water levels for specified periods of time. Depending on the numeric interpolations, low water or flood messages are issued by the Conservation Authority to provide information regarding the possibilities of flood occurrences or water use restrictions.

In 2022 the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority issued eight (8) Lake Erie Watershed Condition Statements, five (5) Water Safety Watershed Condition Statements, three (3) Flood Watch Watershed Condition Statements and two (2) Flood Warning Watershed Condition Statements, in 2022.

and The University of Western Ontario. The new interactive signage comes equipped with a QR code that hikers can scan with their mobile devices. This leads them to the CCCA website. The CCCA website is fitted with a language translator tool that allows them to translate our website into a language of their choice. Being able to reach a wider demographic broadens the CCCA's audience for education, services and information.

Having a strong social media presence helps the CCCA to engage and interact with the community and with our "customers". It opens up an inclusive communications relationship to the public which creates the ability to reach more followers across Canada. Through our channels we are able to advertise, educate and have inclusionary considerations and feedback from the surrounding community and beyond.



Mission Statement

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

The **CCCA** is a non-profit organization that needs your financial support and volunteerism to ensure locally driven environmental initiatives continue in the future. All donations are used for programs and projects within the Catfish Creek watershed.

YES, I would like to demonstrate my devotion and vision for a healthy environment by donating \$ _____ in support of the following initiative(s):

<input type="checkbox"/> Protection & Preservation of Conservation Lands	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Environmental Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife Habitat
<input type="checkbox"/> Springwater Forest Preservation/Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Commemorative Forest Program	<input type="checkbox"/> Wetlands Restoration

Official tax receipt will be issued for minimum donations of \$20.00. **Commemorative gifts and land donations graciously received.**

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ Postal Code: _____

Payment in Cash, Visa, Mastercard, or Debit will gladly be accepted at the CCCA Office or please mail a cheque to: CATFISH CREEK CONSERVATION AUTHORITY, 8079 Springwater Rd., R.R.#5, Aylmer, ON N5H 2R4

2022 Partners/Donors/Volunteers

(please notify our office of any errors or omissions)

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2022 Annual Report

Photo Michael Krahn

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Chairperson’s Message

What a year this has been. From a changing of the guard to a government that seems to be pointing in all directions instead of providing a way forward. This has Dusty our General Manager and department heads adapting and adjusting to the Conservation Authorities Act and its legislative requirements and amendments as it evolves daily. Staff also still provide an extensive list of mandatory programs and services and user fee principal non mandatory services to the residents of the Catfish Creek Watershed on top of all the newly mandated provincial requirements.

There has been a number of significant changes. The resignation of our General Manager and Kelsey Oatman, Program Support Assistant, as well as the retirement of Tony Difazio, Resource Planning Coordinator of 22 years which has had a cascading effect on our team. Dusty Underhill was confirmed as our new General Manager. Gerrit Kremers went from Conservation Areas Supervisor to Resource Planning Coordinator in a matter of months. Al Bradford was welcomed as our new Conservation Areas Supervisor and has been a great addition to the CCCA staff compliment. Brittany Bell came on board as our Program Support Assistant in charge of communications, bookings and gate staff. Technicians Austin Verbeek, Noah Pineau, and Victor Harrington were also driving forces towards another banner year in the Springwater Campground. Susan Simmons our Financial Services Coordinator, did a super job bringing Brittany up to speed and keeping our finances on the straight and narrow, focusing on transparency and accountability. Peter Dragunas, Water Management Technician, had another successful year leading our Water Resources and Reforestation Departments. The municipal elections also created major changes on the board. Arthur Oslach and myself remain with Lori Baldwin Sands and Rick Cerna moving on to other assignments. Sally Martin finally is able to put up her feet and enjoy retirement. Thank you Rick and Sally for your years of dedication to the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority and your mentorship to a newbie. Special thanks to Lori for stepping up to fill in after the passing of Mark Tinlin and for your past year as chairperson. I would like to welcome Steve Peters, Scott

Lewis and Morgaine Halpin to the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority Board of Directors.

This has been a busy year. With the return of many programs put on hold by COVID-19, Springwater Conservation Area Campground was booked solid most of the summer and staff ran their feet off with weddings at the schoolhouse. The Evans Sisters Stage is nearing completion after material delays. More electrical upgrades are also planned for the east campground. A new playground was erected in the seasonal campground. Stream bank and parking lot enhancements were also completed with help from the ELP class at the Archie Coulter Conservation Area.

2022 saw a very generous 50.19 acre land donation from Windon Farms Limited. The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority is forever grateful for the land donation and to all those who have donated and supported the Conservation Authority past, present, and future.

The year end highlight was the installation of the new information trail signs with QR codes that allow the information to be viewed in the language of your choice. Thank you to the STEAM Education Centre, Fanshawe College and University of Western Ontario for creating them.

In closing, I would also like to extend thanks to all of our partners, supporters and to our member municipalities for their extended efforts and support throughout 2022. As chairperson, I am looking forward to working with everyone in the upcoming fiscal year.

Thank you.

Paul Buchner, CCCA Chairperson



Corporate Services

The activities of the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority are governed by a Board of Directors comprised of five (5) members appointed by the five (5) participating municipalities of the Catfish Creek watershed.

Board Member	Municipality
Paul Buchner	Township of South-West Oxford (Vice-Chairperson)
Arthur Oslach	Town of Aylmer (Vice-Chairperson)
Sally Martyn	Municipality of Central Elgin
Scott Lewis	Township of Malahide

Departed Board Members in 2022

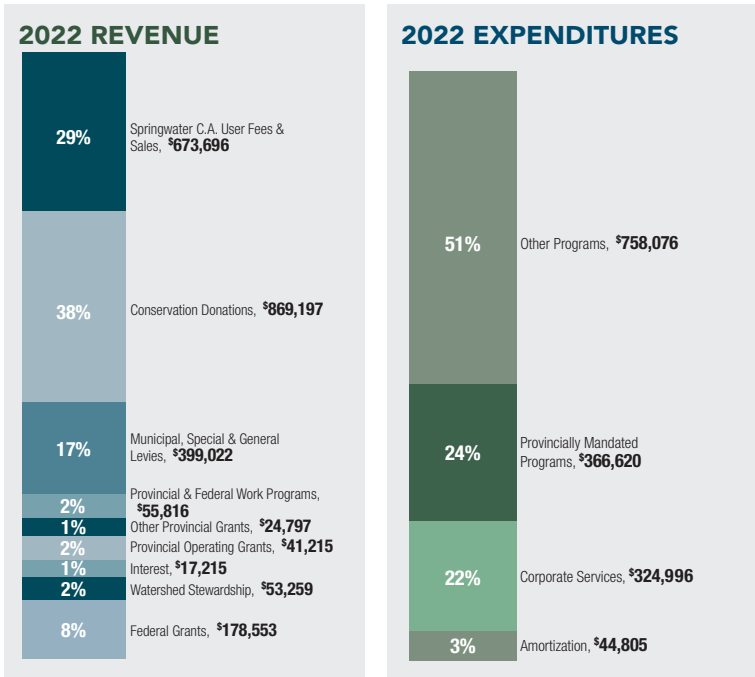
Lori Baldwin-Sands	City of St. Thomas
Rick Cerna	Township of Malahide

Staff Member	Position
Dusty Underhill	General Manager/ Secretary-Treasurer
Susan Simmons	Financial Services Coordinator
Al Bradford	Conservation Areas Supervisor
Brittany Bell	Program Support Assistant
Gerrit Kremers	Resource Planning Coordinator
Peter Dragunas	Water Management Technician
Austin Verbeek	Conservation Areas Assistant
Noah Pineau	Field Technician
And our many seasonal staff, summer students and volunteers.	

Departed Staff Members in 2022

Tony Difazio	Resource Planning Coordinator
Kelsey Oatman	Program Support Assistant

2022 Financial Report



Copies of the full 2022 Audited Financial Statements may be obtained by contacting the Authority Administration Centre.

Conservation Lands

In 2022, the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) focused its conservation lands efforts on the enhancement of the Springwater Conservation Area with new buildings and attractions and a focus on initiatives that promoted accessibility, awareness, and appreciation of nature on lands owned and managed by the Conservation Authority.

Throughout the watershed, improving ecological health, curating an appreciation for nature, and ensuring our lands are protected and enhanced is always at the forefront of our activities. Thanks to the generous and financial support from different local and private organizations, government agencies, and our many community partners, the following was undertaken in Springwater Conservation Area (SPW), Archie Coulter Conservation Area (ACCA), and Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area (YNHA) in 2022.

- Partnered with the East Elgin Secondary School Environmental Leadership Program (ELP) to plant native trees and shrubs at the Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area.
- Completed six (6) job placements through Canada Summer Jobs, an internship with Career Launcher and a training incentive grant from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development delivered through Fanshawe College.
- Completed the construction of a new parking lot located on the south-east corner of the ACCA to provide an additional safe parking area for the authorities growing number of visitors.
- Entered into an agreement with Passport Canada to offer contactless payment options to our clients, and installed parking signs at the Springwater Forest and the three (3) main Conservation Areas (SPW C.A., ACCA, and YNHA) to allow visitors to pay their trail fees or day passes through a mobile App.
- Partnered with STEAM Centre, Fanshawe College, and Western University to create multilingual signs for new to Canada residents.
- Several Special Events were held at the Springwater Conservation Area: VanFest, Canada's Largest Premier Van and Truck Show was held in June with attendees from across Canada and the United States; Pawsitively Elgin, a community based event incorporating the ever progressive world of canine companionship was held in July; She Rises, woman

empowering workshop was held in September; the Christmas Spirit Walk was held in December with help from the Elgin Hiking Trail Club, along with many weddings, family picnics, and company events.;

- Austin Verbeek, Conservation Areas Assistant for the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority was acclaimed CCCA's newest Provincial Offences Officer, enforcing Sections 28 and 29 of the Conservation Authorities Act.
- Hosted in person, the Carolinian Forest Festival at Springwater Conservation Area, and Marsh Quest Festival at the Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area.
- Springwater Conservation Area purchased 20 new picnic tables to accommodate our rising number in guests.
- Installed new playground equipment in the Poplar Hill campground.
- Continued improvements to the Springwater East Campground, expanding electrical services availability to convert twelve (12) un-serviced sites into 30amp serviced sites.
- Installed a Trail Fee Donation Box at the Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area
- Worked with staff from Ontario Police College (OPC) to complete yearly maintenance on the Path of Honor.
- Through funding provided by Water Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI), the Springwater Conservation Area Dam was able to have concrete repair work completed on the south easterly wing wall. Dam gantry and fence received repairs and a fresh coat of paint. A new staff gauge was installed on the North Easterly wing wall.
- Research permits were released for work in our various Conservation Areas to such organizations as The University of Guelph, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) and Bird Studies Canada.
- Co-operative education placements were provided to students from St. Joseph's Catholic High School and East Elgin Secondary School.
- Springwater Conservation Area was able to open to seasonal campers on May 6th and transient campers on May 20th, without any additional restrictions in place.



Stewardship Services

Over the course of the year, Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) undertook environmental stewardship projects on seven (7) private landowner properties. Eight (8) different projects were undertaken consisting of over one (1) acre of wetland habitat, ten (10) acres of tall grass prairie habitat and six (6) erosion control structures. Seven (7) of the eight (8) stewardship projects have been completed as of the end of December 2022. The CCCA worked with Elgin Stewardship Council, Ducks Unlimited, ALUS Elgin, Elgin Clean Water Program and the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund through Environment and Climate Change Canada on the majority of these projects. CCCA also completed a native shrub restoration project at Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area (YNHA). This project consisted of planting selected wildlife shrubs around three (3) different wetlands on the west side of the YNHA. CCCA collaborated with East Elgin Secondary Schools Environmental Leadership Program (ELP) to plant a variety of different native fruit and non-fruit bearing shrubs around existing wetlands.



Environmental Planning

In 2022, the Province continued to approve amendments, Build More Homes Faster Act 2022, to the Conservation Authorities Act, the main piece of legislation that guides a coalition of 36 Conservation Authorities (CA's) within jurisdictional watersheds in Ontario. As CA's pivot to the new Provincially Mandated Programs administrative framework, we also continued to define roles and responsibilities with member Municipalities to meet the needs of watershed residents as a local, environmental resource management agency.

One of The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA's) core mandates continues to be the delivery of programs and services to protect public health/safety and property damage in proximity to Natural Hazards such as flooding, erosion, shorelines and wetlands. The CCCA can draw upon 70 plus years of experience to help the public and Municipalities mitigate the effects of an ever-changing global climate on our day-to-day lives.

Environmental Education

Environmental education programs shifted back to in-person programming this year with the lifting of public health restrictions. The Authority also saw an increase in the amount of school groups and community groups that got to participate in outdoor environmental education since the pandemic.

- In 2022, Maple Syrup programming saw the return of in person field trips. Authority staff culminated 10 days of Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) programming, with 765 students from Grades 1-3.
- St Thomas YMCA hosted youth camps at Springwater Conservation Area for two (2) separate weeks.
- CCCA hosted school groups from four (4) different schools for various outdoor educational programming with 198 students participating.
- Hosted the East Elgin Secondary School (EESS) ELP chainsaw certification at Springwater Conservation Area, which assists annually in hazard tree removal within the Conservation Area.
- Hosted thirteen (13) days of woodlot management with EESS ELP class, in a spruce plantation located on Mapleton Line.

In December 2022, the Province of Ontario introduced new regulatory amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act. Ontario Regulation 596/22 included changes to our non-mandatory review and commenting services for development applications, which allow CA's to direct development away from hazardous lands or undertakings that may aggravate natural processes. Specifically, in 2022 CCCA staff reviewed and provided information on the following:

- Assisted Municipalities with the review of over 70 Planning Act applications such as Severances, Minor Variance & Zone Change Applications, Plans of Condominium/Subdivisions and Official Plan Amendments.
- Provided input on over 75 inquiries from landowners, consultants, real estate agents.
- Issued 35 Permits, authorizations or letters of opinion on Section 28 applications.

- 500 students from grades 4-6 attended the Marsh Quest Festival at YNHA in collaboration with EESS ELP and Thames Valley District Schoolboard.
- Carolinian Forest Festival saw 2000 grade 7-8 students attend over the course of four (4) days. Completed in collaboration with multiple community partners, Conservation Authorities and Thames Valley District Schoolboard.



Reforestation

The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) understands the significance of watershed management and conservation strategies to enhance air, water quality, and protection of areas within the watershed that are susceptible to erosion. Through reforestation, the Authority in association with our municipalities, residents, and special interest groups coordinate to provide direction for the enhancement of interior forest habitat and extend natural heritage corridors throughout the Catfish Creek watershed while protecting areas susceptible to erosion.

The opportunity to collaborate with government agencies and local interest groups for watershed forest cover enhancement projects along with landowner

collaboration has allowed the CCCA to implement an improved and focused Carolinian species planting strategy. Thereby establishing a variety of Carolinian hardwoods, wildlife shrubs, and conifer tree species throughout the watershed, for the enhancement of interior forest habitat, extended natural heritage corridors, and to provide a means of erosion protection.

The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority augmented and enhanced the forest cover and wildlife corridors within the Authority's administrative boundary by planting 14,000 Carolinian tree species and wildlife shrubs in 2022.