

Environmental Planning

Since 1950, the CCCA has been fulfilling our mandate under the Conservation Authorities Act to deliver programs and services on behalf of our member municipalities. This includes commenting on Planning Act applications and regulating development in proximity to Natural Hazards. Due to changes as part of Bill 23, CCCA now only comments on planning applications in respect to Natural Hazards and no longer comments on Natural Heritage features.

Staff from the CCCA reviewed and provided comments on the following development applications, inquiries and land use planning applications in 2023; over 70 Planning Act applications including severances, minor variances, zone change applications, and subdivision and condominium official plan amendments. Staff also provided professional input in regards to 70 inquiries from landowners, consultants and real estate agents. Issued 22 permits, authorizations or letters of opinion. Conservation Ontario's Streamlining Initiative assisted in providing minimal turnaround times on permits and the CCCA will continue to support this initiative.



Water Management

Common 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.

Locally climate change is increasingly affecting the well-being and sustenance of our communities. Forecasts indicate the risks may quickly rise, the impacts that we are seeing today could be an early indication of a critical outlook unless we confront the impacts of climate change without delay. More frequent heat waves, droughts, and localized concentrated storms are responsible for farmers experiencing moderate to severe crop failures. Scientists have calculated that weather pattern changes have become roughly 100 times more likely because of climate change. As seen in 2023 the weather patterns quickly change from very dry conditions and within an hour, we are experiencing very intense localized precipitation, and flash flooding. At times there is very little climate stability and minimal time to recover.

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 fresh water natural resource. The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) is taking steps to try to minimize the impacts of climate change through the adaptation of innovative water

management strategies/projects.

In 2023, the CCCA researched and investigated options to create a hydrologic model for the Catfish Creek watershed to increase flood forecasting lead-time for residents of the watershed, characterize localized drought conditions and impacts, and identify water attenuation areas for floodwater storage capacity. The hydrologic simulation model for the Catfish Creek watershed would be developed using the Hydrologic Modeling System (HEC-HMS), which has gained favor with Provincial Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and several larger Conservation Authorities.

The CCCA works closely with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry 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. 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 2023, the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority issued two (2) Lake Erie Watershed Condition Statements and nine (9) Water Safety Watershed Condition Statements.

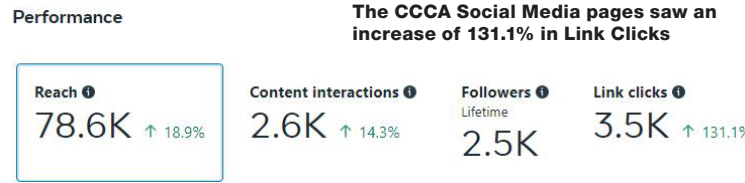
Communications

Over the past year, CCCA has made significant strides in enhancing our communications activity through various social media channels. We have effectively utilized platforms like our website, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to disseminate information about conservation projects, environmental initiatives, and upcoming events. By consistently sharing engaging content, including stunning visuals and informative videos, the CCCA has successfully raised awareness about the importance of environmental conservation and has actively encouraged public participation in our programs. Our proactive approach towards utilizing social media has not only increased community engagement but has also established the CCCA as a reliable and accessible source of information for all matters related to conservation.

place at Springwater Conservation Area. This ensures those that do not follow social media will have access to important information on their daily commute. Finally, the funding enabled the Administration Centre to be fitted with new VOIP phones. The new phones will help to ensure those calling the office can easily contact the department they are looking for.

On Instagram, the CCCA saw a Reach Increase of 18.9% and Content Interactions also saw an increase in 14.3%. Springwater Conservation Area social media platforms saw an increase of 100% in both respective categories. We have doubled the number of unique accounts exposed to our content, thus expanding our audience and increasing brand awareness, website traffic, and potential customer conversions. Doubling our Content Interactions indicates a significant uptick in likes, comments, shares and saves on our content. This spike signifies a higher level of interest and connection with our content, fostering a stronger relationship with our followers and potentially attracting new ones. Overall, both metrics demonstrate a substantial growth in online presence and audience engagement.

Social media platforms offer a powerful tool for Conservation Authorities to reach a wider audience and promote their initiatives. By leveraging platforms like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, the CCCA can engage with the community, share education content, raise awareness about conservation efforts, and inspire individuals to take action. Through consistent and strategic social media presence, the CCCA can effectively communicate our message, foster a sense of environmental stewardship, and ultimately achieve our conservation goals.



Catfish Creek Conservation Authority was awarded funding through the Community Services Recovery Fund implemented by The United Way in 2023. The funding was centered on technology advancements within the Springwater Conservation Area, where the CCCA Administration Centre is located. An internet tower was erected to provide a more stable internet connection to the Administration Centre, which also would open up opportunities in the future to provide visitor's with internet services that they may purchase. A new digital sign was installed in front of the CCCA Administration Centre, which will display important information including Flood Outlook messages and events taking

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

2023 Partners/Donors/Volunteers				
(please notify our office of any errors or omissions)				
A1-Unique Installations	Dowler-Karn	John B. Wilson & Son	Ministry of Environment	Thames Valley District
Aaroc Aggregates	Dr. A. Wiltse Hoonen Veterinary	Well Drilling	Conservation & Parks	School Board
ALUS Elgin	Ducks Unlimited	Jones, Ella	Municipality of Central Elgin	Town of Aylmer
Ambrose Plumbing & Heating	Dugit, Justine	Jones, Jesse	Neville, Belinda	Township of Malahide
Aylmer Express	Eco-Canada	K&K Locksmiths	Ontario Police College -	Township of South-West Oxford
Aylmer Optimist Club	EESS-Environmental Leadership	Kebbel, Deneen	Path of Honour	Tri-County Travellers
Baillargeon, Mariette	Program	Kerr, Wayne	Order of Good Cheer	Van Fest
Battson, Rick	Elgin Clean Water Program	Kettle Creek C.A.	Polland, Thom	Vanhoucke, Margaret &
Blake, Helen	Edward Jones	Kielstra, Henry	Post, Geoff	Raymond
Bode, Paul & Margo	Elgin Chrysler	Kitts, Dean	Regional Municipality of York	Vinnai, Jesse
Boersma, Deb & Mike	Elgin Stewardship Council	Koolen Electric	Rieger, Karen	Wagler Mini Barns
Brooks, Cathy	Enbridge Inc.	Kyle, Susan	Rieger, Tracy	Wallace, Ruth
Buchner, Paul	Fick, Donald	Laemers Excavating	Rimnyak, Bill & Linda	Weisler, Jamie
Campbell, William	Forests Ontario	Lampman, Mary Jane	Rimnyak, Karin	Wildeman, Alan
Canada Helps.Org	Gillespie, Nancy	Learn, Donald	Rooyackers, Ron	Williams Funeral Home
Canada Summer Jobs	Grand River C.A.	Long Point Region C.A.	Scott Lewis Auto	Windam Farms (Ian Begg)
Canadian Chestnut Council	Griffin, Shirley	Lowe, Jeff	Sharpe, Alan	Yake, Richard
Canadian Online Giving	Gubbles, Matt & Maria	Luksys-Vinnai, Loretta	Simmons, Mark	Yarmouth Crane & Metal
Foundation	H.A. Kebbel Funeral Home	Martin, Shannon	Simmons, Taylor	Fabricators
Casier, Ron	Henderson, Debra	Martyn, Sally	Smale, Kim	Yarmouth Group
City of St. Thomas	Herrington, Victor	McConnell, Elizabeth	South Simcoe Police Service	
Conservation Ontario	Hill, Thomas	McFarlan Rowlands	Southwest Ontario	
County of Elgin	Inwood, Shauna	McIntyre, Nathan	Tourism Corp.	
Cyril J. Demeyere Limited	Irwin, Bobbi	McLachlin, Ian & Anne	Springwater Mills	
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Depuydt, Christine	Jakob, Joseph	Meertels, Ron	St. Thomas Field Naturalists	
Doug Tarry Limited		Miernicki, Tracy	Tenhoor, Henry	

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2023 Annual Report

Photo Nicole Birkby

Chairperson’s Message

As I look back on the past year, I am reminded of the quote from A Tale of Two Cities "It was the best of times and the worst of times" which highlights a year where fundamental opposites were taking place at the same time.

The CCCA, a leading environmental agency has continually taken the long-term view on protection of the Catfish Creek watershed. This strength will not change in the coming years, as projects and programs are undertaken for the benefit of the environment, the people and the communities within our jurisdiction.

It has been a whirlwind of a year starting with the hugely successful Maple Syrup Festival and a very busy camping season. Many special events were held despite the wet weather, as well as the opening of the The Three Sisters Stage, and not to forget about the acquisition of the Tisdale Conservation Area which was made possible by a very generous donor. The work carried into the fall with the Thames Valley Cross Country meets, Marsh Quest, the Carolinian Forest Festival and the Spirit Walk.

The dark cloud is the continuing work resulting from ice induced flooding in the watershed and how we come up with solutions to fund and advance our Category 1 Mandatory Programs and Services. Numerous meetings with Malahide Township and the Port Bruce Rate Payers were executed which highlights the challenges that global warming has posed on our watershed in regard to flooding. Staff continue to meet mandated provincial requirements, while dealing with the workload of more invasive species and threats to our woodlands, as well as major climatic weather patterns which devastate our trail systems.

Moving forward, the board and staff are committed to upholding the high standards set by the CCCA's staff and members. We are committed to the well-being of our member municipalities and will ensure to prioritize this goal as we continue to work and build relationships within our watershed.

I want to thank my fellow board members, three of whom are new this year: Gary Clarke, Scott Lewis, and Morgaine Halpin who agreed to become Vice Chair in her rookie year. A big thanks to Arthur Oslach for his continual service on the board. A special thank you to Dusty and the great staff who showed up every day and worked tirelessly to make the past year a great one. From coming up with new ideas to move us forward, meeting all government deadlines as well as spending countless hours finding grants and funding to make up shortfalls.

Many thanks to everyone and keep up the good work.

Paul Buchner,
CCCA Chairperson



Paul Buchner



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.

Current Board Member	Municipality
Paul Buchner	Township of South-West Oxford (Chairperson)
Morgaine Halpin	Municipality of Central Elgin (Vice-Chairperson)
Arthur Oslach	Town of Aylmer
Scott Lewis	Township of Malahide
Gary Clarke	City of St. Thomas

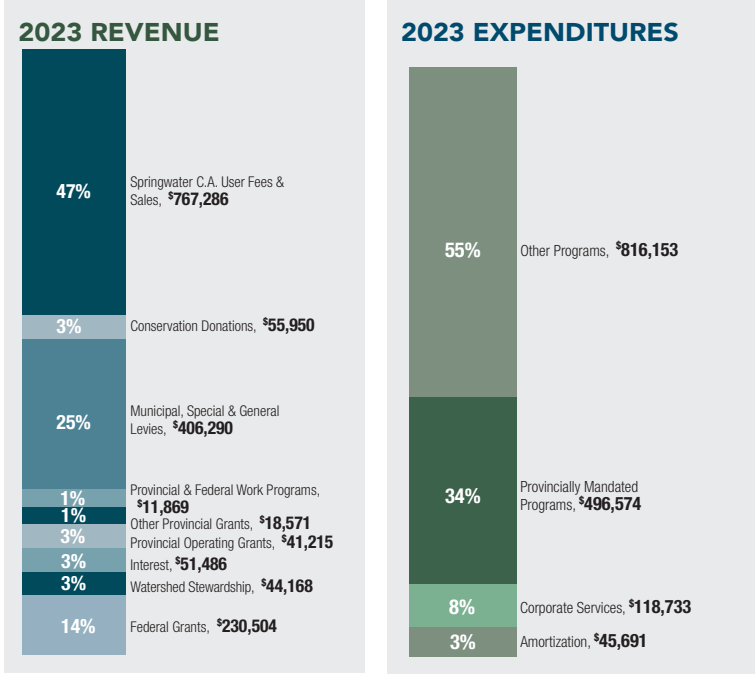
Departed Board Members in 2023	
Sally Martyn	Municipality of Central Elgin

Current Staff Member	Position
Dusty Underhill	General Manager / Secretary-Treasurer
Susan Simmons	Financial Services Coordinator
Al Bradford	Conservation Areas Supervisor
Brittany Bell	Communications/Program Support Assistant

Gerrit Kremers	Resource Planning Coordinator
Peter Dragunas	Water Management Technician
Thom Polland	Conservation Areas Assistant (started September 2023)
Noah Pineau	Field Technician
Shelby Martin	Customer Services Outreach Clerk
And our many seasonal staff, summer students and volunteers.	

Departed Staff Members in 2023	
Austin Verbeek.....	Conservation Areas Assistant (departed August 2023)

2023 Financial Report



Copies of the full 2023 Audited Financial Statements may be obtained by contacting the Authority Administration Centre.



Conservation Lands

In 2023, the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) focused its conservation lands efforts on the enhancement of our Conservation Area's with a focus on initiatives promoting accessibility, awareness, and appreciation of nature on all 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 financial support from different local and private organizations, government agencies, and our many community partners, the following was undertaken on CCCA owned lands in 2023.

Completed two (2) job placements through Canada Summer Jobs and one (1) job placement with Eco Canada. Co-operative education placements were provided to students from East Elgin Secondary School. The CCCA has long standing relationships with its local secondary schools fostering an excellent coop placement experience.

Several Special Events were held at the Springwater Conservation Area in 2023: Trout Derby, operated through May with 3 tagged trout worth \$100 each, volunteering efforts provided with thanks by: Tri-County Travellers and Friends of Springwater.

Vanfest, Canada's Largest Premier Van and Truck Show held in June saw attendees come from across Canada and the United States. Paws-itively Elgin, had roughly 1085 attendees over the course of the day. She Rises, a women's empowerment workshop was held in September. The Christmas Spirit Walk was held in December, with help from the Elgin Hiking Trail Club. The Day Use Area hosted numerous weddings, family picnics and company events.

Continual support was provided to the Memorial Path of Honor at the Ontario Police College.

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.



The Tisdale Conservation Area was assessed to undertake understory flora and forest stand inventories were completed. An avian bird study was also completed throughout the property.

Al Bradford, Conservation Areas Supervisor for the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority was acclaimed CCCA's newest Provincial Offences Officer, enforcing Section 28 and 29 of the Conservation Authorities Act.

CCCA worked in conjunction with the Canadian Mental Health Association to plant 6 Memorial Trees. Staff also installed 6 donor/ memorial benches throughout Springwater Forest.

Grand Opening for the The Three Sisters Stage was held in June.

Attended the Aylmer District Trappers Workshop which was held at the East Elgin Sportsman Club

Renovations were completed at the East Gatehouse, with updates to the interior and exterior of the building. Infrastructure was installed to provide internet & phone services to enable Campers to check in at the East Gate.

A new automatic gate system along with a pay station was installed at the East Campground entrance, which will allow patrons to enter and access our day use area throughout the year. The entry card system was updated so the cards worked at both the East & West Campground Entrances.

A work day was organized to remove invasive trees/ shrubs from the berm at the Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area (YNHA) so the integrity of the berm is not compromised.

An additional ELP work day was completed for preparation of the Spirit Walk and Maple Syrup Festival, including firewood cleanup with the ELP students

Hazard tree removal and inspections were carried out along with trail maintenance through our Conservation Areas to keep our trails safe for our users.

Stewardship Services

Once again, landowners in the Catfish Creek Watershed contributed to a bi-national effort to improve water quality in the Great Lakes. The contribution each landowner is making is necessary to achieve incremental improvements to the health of the entire Lake Erie Basin. The scope of the projects may vary, however the vision each landowner has demonstrated in 2023 will grow across the landscape in years to come. Projects include wetland construction, stream-bank erosion control, buffer strip enhancement, and tall grass prairie restoration. Reducing discharges of phosphorus is an important goal, however restoration projects also improve soil health and provide fish and wildlife habitat including critical habitat for species at risk.

The CCCA undertook eight (8) restoration projects in 2023 on six (6) private landowner's properties and one (1) CCCA owned property (Tisdale Conservation Area). The 17-acre agricultural field at the Tisdale Conservation Area was restored to native tall grass prairie, consisting of multiple different native grasses and forbes, creating the largest single tall grass prairie plot on any of the authority owned lands. Private landowner projects consisted of the creation of almost 2 acres of wetland habitat, 12 acres of tall grass prairie creation and erosion control. The CCCA worked with federal organizations like Environment and Climate Change

Canada, and other local and private organizations such as the Elgin Stewardship Council, Ducks Unlimited, ALUS Elgin and the Elgin Clean Water Program. A native shrub restoration project was completed at the Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area in conjunction with the Environmental Leadership Program. Native fruit bearing and non fruit bearing shrubs were planted around three wetland complexes. This project was made possible by Enbridge Gas Incorporated.



Environmental Education

Environmental educators finished their first complete full year of programming since the pandemic. The Authority saw a variety of ages and grades come through our programs. Offered on a fee for service basis, the most popular programs were; Exploring the Aquatic World, Adventure Hike, and the greatly appreciated Maple Syrup Program.

- In 2023, Maple Syrup programming was in full effect, exceeding records with the highest attendance in the last 5 years, which was 3,395 attendees for 2023! The Authority staff culminated 13 days (2 being rain days) of elementary school programming (TVDSB and LCDSB) which brought us a total of 1,090 students from JK- Grade 4.
- St. Thomas YMCA continued to host their summer camps at Springwater Conservation Area for 2 separate weeks in the summer. Roughly 20-25 children attended per week.



Reforestation

The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) understands the significance of watershed management and conservation strategies to enhance air and water quality and protection of areas within the watershed susceptible to erosion. Through reforestation, the Authority in association with Forests Ontario, 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 us 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, extending natural heritage corridors, and erosion protection.

The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority augmented and enhanced the forest cover and wildlife corridors within the authority's administrative boundary by planting 3,000 Carolinian tree species and wildlife shrubs.

