



Catfish Creek Conservation Authority

2024-2034 Strategic Plan



Michael B.
PHOTOGRAPHY

Land Acknowledgement

We would like to take this time to recognize that the land on which we gather is in the traditional territory shared between the Haudenosaunee (ho - din - oh - show - knee) confederacy, the Anishinabe (ah - nih - shih - nah - bai) nations, and the Attiwonderonk Neutrals. First Nations people have longstanding relationships to the land, water and Southwestern Ontario and we are thankful for the opportunity to live, learn and share with mutual respect and appreciation.





Table of Contents

Message From Our Board Chairperson and General Manager/ Secretary Treasurer	3
Our Watershed	4
Executive Summary	5
Strategic Pillar #1	6
Strategic Pillar #2	7
Strategic Pillar #3	8
Strategic Pillar #4	9
Strategic Pillar #5	11
Next Steps	12
For More Information	13

Message From Our Board Chairperson and General Manager/ Secretary Treasurer

Message from our Chairperson and General Manager/ Secretary-Treasurer,

On behalf of the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA), we are pleased to present our new ten-year Strategic Plan, which aligns our work with our core mandate identifying our priorities for 2024-2034.

Our organization was born in 1950, and we have been providing services to our municipalities and watershed residents for 73 years. Our new 10 year strategy builds on previous successes and accomplishments, while we modernize how we operate. This will allow us to be more responsive to changing watershed conditions and economic factors.

While this plan is responsive to new threats, we remain focused on our core mandate to protect people and property from natural hazards and their risks, the conservation and management of lands, and other programs, connecting residents to the environment through experiences of nature, and finally, a commitment to excellent customer service.

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

The CCCA prides itself on its “grass roots” approach and strives to ensure that programs clearly match local watershed priorities and are receptive of the new core mandatory programs and services embedded within the Conservation Authorities Act. Active communication with all stakeholders (municipal councils, residents, special interest groups) is necessary for public confidence and support.

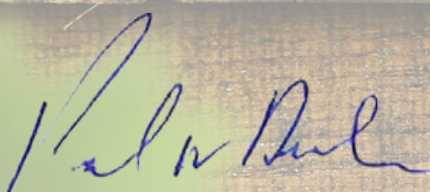
Sincerely,

Paul Buchner

Chairperson, Board of Directors

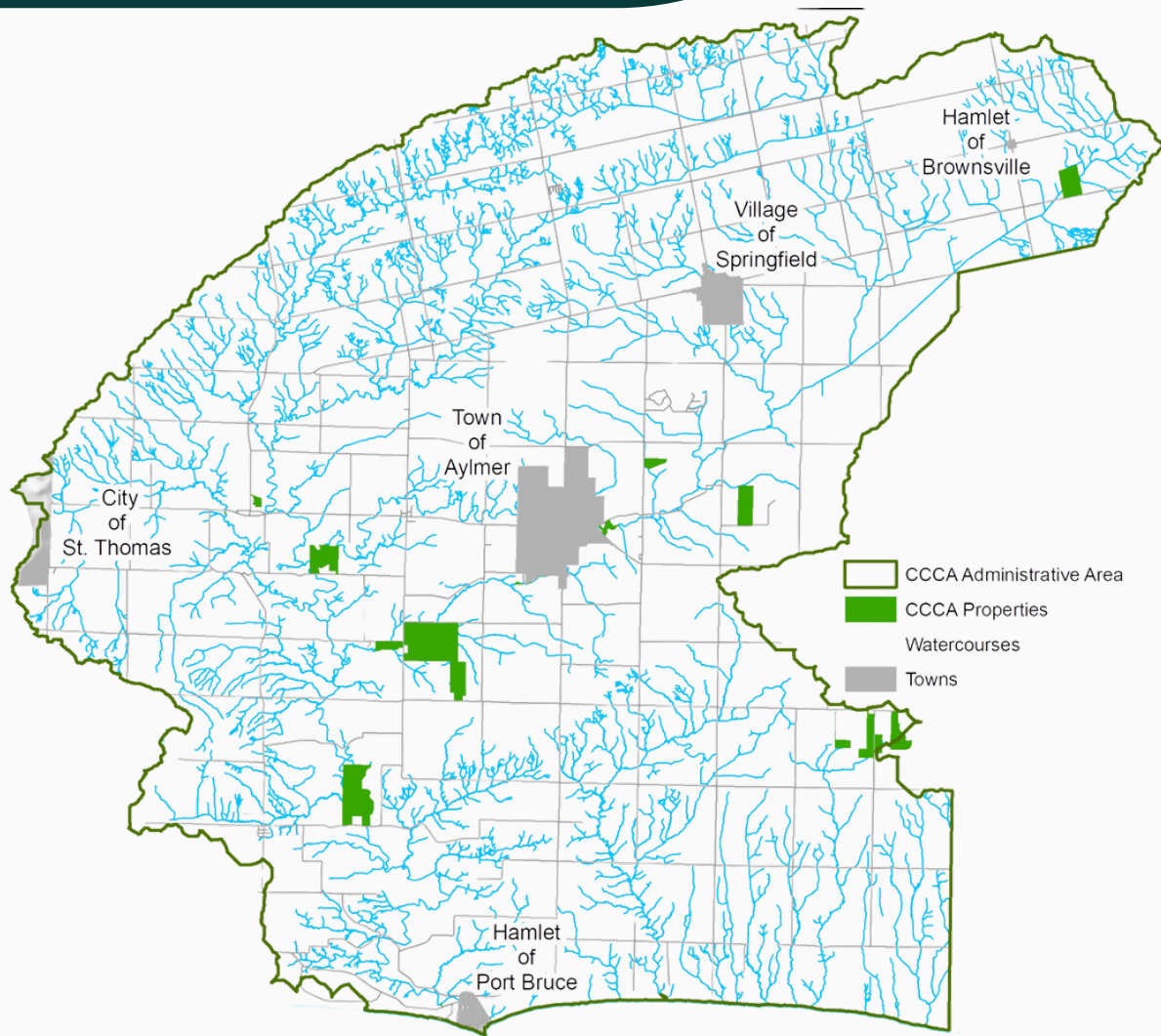
Dusty Underhill

General Manager / Secretary-Treasurer



Our Watershed

PAGE 4



Total Area
490 Sq Km



Population
21000+



Natural Area
134 Sq Km



Agriculture
346 Sq Km



Settlement
10 Sq Km

Our Vision: Harmony between the social and ecological needs of the watershed for present and future generations.

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

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 sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities and customer service that the community expects from us.

Creative

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

Compassionate

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

Proud

We are proud of the Catfish Creek Conservaton Authority and dedicating ourselves to the protection of the watershed. We will work hard to increase natural spaces so that future generations can also be proud of the watershed.

Strategic Pillar #1

PAGE 6

Protect life and minimize property damage from natural hazards and climate impacts.

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

Strategic Actions:

- Continue to monitor, assess, delineate and map hazards.
- Complete and maintain updated floodplain and regulation mapping within the watershed.
- Study surface water flows and levels, surface/ groundwater interactions and flood hazards.
- Maintain a streamflow network.
- Study the potential impact of changing climatic conditions on natural hazards.
- Deliver real-time information for flood forecasting, messaging and warning.
- Continue to develop our municipal flood forecasting and warning partnerships.
- Provide programs and services for ice management within our jurisdictional boundary.
- Develop a watershed based resource management strategy.
- Refine our monitoring network, and build capacity around data management tools and our flood operations center to ensure effective water quantity decision making.
- Facilitate drought and low water forecasting and warning.
- Implement permits and regulations under section 28 of the Conservation Authorities Act.
- Provincial Water Quality and Groundwater Quantity Monitoring.
- Source Protection Authority under the Clean Water Act, 2006 (Section 13 of O. Reg 686/12).



Strategic Pillar #2

PAGE 7

Improve and Protect the ecological health of the Catfish Creek watershed increasing biodiversity, habitat connectivity, and natural cover.



Our focus is on improving the ecological health of the watershed and to assist in the restoration of the aquatic & terrestrial features of the watershed. 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, 80 acres of tall grass prairies, and protected and restored from erosion over 1300m of creek banks. 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 and information such as CCCA Watershed Plans and other community based Natural Heritage restoration plans, work with landowners to restore the natural environment through the implementation of targeted stewardship projects that restore natural areas.
- Acquire greenspace to protect and manage natural heritage systems.
- Work with our Municipal partners to support "Greening Strategies" to increase forest cover and other habitats (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 creeks and lake.
- Develop plans to manage invasive species and enhance biodiversity at CCCA properties.
- Ensure we use the best science and information for our decision making.
- Initiate actions in key program areas to adapt to the effects of climate change and mitigate its effect on the watershed.
- Protect drinking water sources through the source water protection program.
- To promote and conserve biodiversity and sustainably use biological resources.
- Foster local relationships between the CCCA, government organizations and non government organizations.
- Identify, advocate for and secure critical project funding.
- Implement regulations under section 29 of the Conservation Authorities Act.

Strategic Pillar #3

PAGE 8

Curate an appreciation and create equitable access to nature.



The Catfish Creek watershed is home to over 22,000 watershed residents whose health and well-being can benefit from our passive recreational opportunities. We also provide environmental education through our outdoor education programs on a cost recoverable basis (fee for service). As a large landowner within the Carolinian Life Zone, we want to share our unique brand of nature with residents from inside and outside our watershed delivering programs to educate and provide passive recreational opportunities to all of our demographics.


Strategic Actions:

- Deliver opportunities for the public to learn from, enjoy, and respect the watershed.
- Commit to deliver a financially sustainable nature/outdoor education program that is mobile, hands-on and interactive.
- Engage local community partners.
- Enhance our social media presence to promote our organization, events, public consultation opportunities and natural watershed assets.
- Better understand our customers and improve services and visitor experiences at CCCA properties (e.g., buildings, signage, trail maps, and accessibility where possible).
- Identify and remove socio-economic barriers to accessing CCCA properties and programs.
- Seek opportunity for the creation of trail connectivity throughout the watershed.
- Design and implement education programming targeted at people of all abilities and backgrounds.
- Strengthen CCCA's network of volunteers and environmental stewards.
- Balance ecology and the economy in decision making.
- Lead community engagement.
- Highlight and promote recreational activities.
- Optimize our visitor's experiences.
- Collaborate with local educational institutions on mutual research interests to enhance knowledge sharing.
- Establish CCCA facilities as community hubs.

Strategic Pillar #4

PAGE 9

Ensure our Conservation Lands are protected and enhanced.



The CCCA has acquired a total of over 1,300 acres of land making us the largest public landowner in the watershed. In addition to our 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:

- Ensure the long term sustainability of our natural spaces.
- Programs and services to secure the authority's interests in its lands that include measures for fencing, signage, patrolling and any other measures to prevent unlawful entry on the authority's land and to protect the authority from exposure to liability under the Occupiers' Liability Act.
- Programs and services to maintain any facilities, trails or other amenities that support public access and sustainable recreational activities in conservation areas and that can be provided without the direct support or supervision of staff employed by the authority or by another person or body.
- Conserve, protect, rehabilitate, establish, and manage natural heritage located within the lands owned or controlled by the authority.
- Programs and services to plant trees on lands owned or controlled by the authority, excluding commercial logging.
- Develop and 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 effective business management of our organization and to help meet our natural cover and natural heritage 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.
- Develop a Conservation Area(s) Strategy, provincially mandated by the Conservation Authorities Act.
- Develop a Land Inventory which will include detailed information for every parcel of land the authority owns, manages or controls.
- Lead community engagement and restoration activities on CCCA owned lands.
- The conservation and management of lands under subsection 21.1 (1) of the Conservation Authorities Act.
- Regulations made under Section 29 of the Conservation Authorities Act.

Strategic Pillar #5

PAGE 10

Operate a sustainable, fiscally responsible and adaptable organization.



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

Strategic Actions:

- Enhance existing and develop new partnerships, such as those with academia, and new initiatives to generate new or support existing funding opportunities.
- Commit to maintaining a quick turn around time for permits, work permits and property inquiries.
- Ensure new partners share similar values as our organization and the Province.
- Review current policies and processes to strengthen financial controls and reduce exposure to risk.
- Provide staff training on new technologies as they are deployed.
- Further diversify our funding sources which will result in an increased ratio of self-generated revenue compared with tax-supported revenue.
- Conduct routine evaluations of program and staff performance and report on outcomes to drive improvements.
- Educate staff through learning and development opportunities.
- Enhance and expand fee-for-service work and service delivery for external organizations.
- Build on past successes to deepen existing relationships, reach new audiences and strengthen relationships with stakeholders.
- Ensure adequate staff capacity and resources required to provide outcomes.
- Demonstrate the value of our services and programs to our partners.
- Provide equitable access to information.
- Monitor the progress of implementing this strategic plan.

Next Steps

PAGE 11

The 2024-2034 Catfish Creek Strategic Plan has been completed to highlight our five strategic pillars and associated actions. This plan will guide our annual work planning process over the next 10 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 legislative economic and environmental conditions.





Catfish Creek Conservation Authority



@catfishcreekca



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Catfish Creek Conservation Authority



For More Information

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