

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CATFISH CREEK CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

Thursday, September 11, 2025

Meeting #04/2025

PRESENT:

Paul Buchner	Vice-Chairperson	Township of South West-Oxford
Arthur Oslach	Member	Town of Aylmer
Gary Clarke	Member	City of St. Thomas
Scott Lewis	Member	Township of Malahide

STAFF:

Dusty Underhill	General Manager / Secretary-Treasurer
Peter Dragunas	Water Management Technician
Brittany Bell	Communications/Program Support Assistant
Gerrit Kremers	Resource Planning Coordinator
Al Bradford	Conservation Areas Supervisor

ABSENT:

Morgaine Griffin	Chairperson	Municipality of Central Elgin
Scott Lewis	Member	Township of Malahide
Susan Simmons	Financial Services Coordinator	

OTHERS PRESENT:

Rob Perry Aylmer Express

WELCOME / CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson Griffin welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at (10:06 a.m.).

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

The CCCA recognized that the land on which we gather is in the traditional territory shared between the Haudenosaunee confederacy, the Anishinabe nations, and the Attiwonderonk Neutrals.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

Motion # 41/2025 P. Buchner A. Oslach CARRIED

THAT, the Agenda for the September 11, 2025, Full Authority meeting be adopted as circulated and amended.

DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND THE GENERAL NATURE THEREOF:

No one had a pecuniary interest to disclose at this time.

DISCLOSURE OF INTENTION TO AUDIO / VIDEO RECORD MEETING:

The Chairperson asked for disclosures of intentions to audio or video record the meeting. No one indicated any such intentions at this time.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

Motion #42/2025 P. Buchner A. Oslach CARRIED

THAT, the Minutes of Full Authority Meeting #03/2025 (June 12, 2025), be adopted as circulated.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES:

No one reported any outstanding business to discuss from the previous Minutes.

PUBLIC / SPECIAL DELEGATIONS:

None

REPORTS:

Reports FA 29 to FA 32/2025 – Monthly Staff Reports, were presented, discussed, and resolved.

Motion # 43/2025 A. Oslach G. Clarke CARRIED

THAT, Staff Reports FA 29 to FA 32/2025 for the months June, July and August, 2025 be noted and filed.

Report FA 33/2025 – Summary of Revenue & Expenditures was presented, discussed, and resolved.

Motion # 44/2025 A. Oslach P. Buchner CARRIED

THAT, Report FA 33/2025 – Summary of Revenue & Expenditures, be noted and filed.

Report FA 34/2025 – Accounts Paid was presented, discussed, and resolved.

Motion # 45/2025 G. Clarke P. Buchner CARRIED

THAT, Accounts Paid totalling \$161,028.38, be approved as presented in Report FA 34/2025.

Report FA 35/2025 – 2026 Budget Direction, discussed, and resolved.

Motion # 46/2025 P. Buchner A. Oslach CARRIED

THAT, staff prepare a draft budget based on all contributing factors for the November 2025 Personnel and Finance meeting.

Reports FA 36/2025 – General Managers Retreat 2025, was presented, discussed, and resolved.

Motion # 47/2025 A. Oslach P. Buchner CARRIED

THAT, the Board of Directors receives FA 36/2025 as information.

Report FA 37/2025 – CO Council Meeting 2025, was presented, discussed, and resolved.

Motion # 48/2025 G. Clarke P. Buchner CARRIED

THAT, the Board of Directors receives FA 37/2025 as information.

Report FA 38/2025 – Appointment of Chief Conservation Executive, was presented, discussed, and resolved.

Motion # 49/2025 A. Oslach P. Buchner CARRIED

THAT, the Board of Directors receives FA 38/2025 as information.

Report FA 39/2025 – Conservation Areas Workshop, was presented, discussed, and resolved.

Motion # 50/2025 G. Clarke A. Oslach CARRIED

THAT, the Full Authority authorize the Conservation Areas Supervisor, the Field Technician and the Communications and Program Support Assistant to attend the Conservation Areas Workshop and field trip days in its entirety.

Report FA 40/2025 – Approved Section 28 Regulation Applications, was presented, discussed, and resolved.

Motion # 51/2025 P. Buchner A. Oslach CARRIED

THAT, the Full Authority receives the staff approved Section 28 Regulation Applications Report FA 40/2025, as information.

GENERAL MANAGERS REPORT:

Over the past months, a number of key activities and initiatives have taken place that support our strategic objectives, strengthen partnerships, and enhance the visibility and effectiveness of the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA):

Annual Statistical Survey Submission – Conservation Ontario

We successfully completed and submitted the Conservation Ontario CA Statistical Survey. This annual online survey is a critical initiative that gathers comprehensive data from all 36 Conservation Authorities in Ontario across five key areas: General Information (e.g., watershed size, board members, and staffing levels); Landholdings; CA Foundations; Programs, Services, and Activities; and Financial Operations. The information collected helps Conservation Ontario advocate for the sector, conduct strategic planning, and support province-wide marketing and communication efforts. Our timely and accurate submission ensures that the CCCA is well represented in these collective efforts and contributes to a broader understanding of the role and value of Conservation Authorities in Ontario.

General Managers Retreat – Kingbridge Centre

I attended the annual General Managers retreat hosted at the Kingbridge Centre. This retreat provides an invaluable opportunity for peer engagement and strategic discussions among senior leaders from across the province. Topics covered included current and emerging challenges facing the sector, updates on regulatory frameworks, inter-agency collaboration, and best practices in watershed management. The retreat also fostered informal networking and peer support, which are essential for maintaining a strong and resilient network of Conservation Authorities.

Lake Erie Action Plan (LEAP) Meeting

The LEAP meeting featured a technical and informative presentation by Environment and Climate Change Canada focused on phosphorus loadings to Lake Erie. The session provided the most recent data and trends concerning nutrient contributions from key Canadian tributaries, with a specific focus on agricultural and urban runoff. As phosphorus loading continues to be a major environmental concern contributing to algal blooms and overall water quality degradation, the insights shared were crucial for informing our ongoing efforts in the Catfish Creek watershed. The meeting also reinforced the importance of coordinated watershed-based actions and cross-jurisdictional cooperation.

Conservation Ontario Council Meeting

I participated in the quarterly Conservation Ontario Council Meeting. As outlined in the report provided in the meeting agenda package, this session focused on several timely issues, including provincial policy changes, funding opportunities, and updates from Conservation Ontario's strategic initiatives. Participation in these meetings ensures that the CCCA remains aligned with provincial priorities and maintains a voice in key decision-making processes affecting our sector.

75th Anniversary Celebration – CCCA

The CCCA proudly hosted its 75th Anniversary Celebration, marking a significant milestone in our history of watershed stewardship. The event was a resounding success, drawing strong community participation. Families enjoyed a variety of daytime activities including nature walks, educational booths, and children's programming. In the evening, we hosted a concert that attracted approximately 300 attendees who enjoyed live music in a festive and welcoming atmosphere. Sunday featured an open mic session from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM with around 40 participants and audience members taking part in the community-driven entertainment. Later that night, Arthur provided clear skies for stargazing, offering a memorable experience for those who stayed to enjoy the natural beauty of the area. The entire weekend underscored the enduring connection between the community and the conservation area, and staff are to be commended for their efforts in making the event such a success.

Spraying Services – Town of Aylmer

This month, the CCCA provided spraying services to the Town of Aylmer. These services support the management of invasive plant species and promote healthier natural ecosystems within urban green spaces. Gerrit Kremers provided valuable assistance in completing this work efficiently and in accordance with provincial regulations.

Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism Strategy

Elgin County is currently undertaking a review and re-alignment of its economic development and tourism strategy to better address evolving market conditions, regional challenges, and new opportunities over the next five years. As one of the key stakeholders in the tourism and agriculture sectors, the CCCA was invited to participate in the consultation process. In response, our staff compiled and submitted a list of

recommendations reflecting our priorities and perspectives. These recommendations emphasized the importance of nature-based tourism, sustainable land use practices, and the role of conservation areas as economic and recreational assets. We look forward to seeing how our input will help shape the County's long-term strategy.

CLTIP Review – CA-Owned Lands

We completed the annual review of properties enrolled under the Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP). This process involved a detailed assessment of all CCCA-owned lands to ensure continued compliance with provincial requirements. Our submission to the Province was completed and submitted on schedule, which will support continued eligibility for property tax exemptions on designated conservation lands.

EASE Program Webinar and Grant Application Preparation

Staff attended a webinar on the Enabling Accessibility and Supportive Environments (EASE) Program, which provides funding of up to \$60,000 for small capital projects that enhance accessibility and promote active living for individuals with disabilities and older adults. The program supports initiatives aimed at creating more inclusive, accessible outdoor spaces, buildings, and housing infrastructure. Following the webinar, our staff began developing a grant proposal with the goal of enhancing accessibility features within our conservation areas. The team is working diligently to finalize and submit a strong application within the required timeframe.

FHIMP Watershed Modelling Grant Application

In collaboration with staff, we submitted an application through the Flood Hazard Identification and Mapping Program (FHIMP). The funding would support enhanced watershed modelling to better identify and manage flood risks in the CCCA jurisdiction. Improved modelling will enable us to make more informed decisions related to land use planning, floodplain management, and emergency response. This work is essential in light of increasing climate variability and the need for proactive adaptation measures.

Metis Nation of Ontario Grant

This month, staff successfully completed and submitted the final reports required under the funding agreement with the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). These reports mark the culmination of a significant partnership project that focused on environmental stewardship, cultural knowledge-sharing, and community engagement within the Catfish Creek watershed.

The final reporting process included detailed documentation of all project activities, outcomes, financial expenditures, and community impacts. These deliverables not only demonstrate our accountability and transparency in the use of grant funds but also highlight the meaningful progress made through collaborative efforts between the CCCA and the MNO. Our reporting reflected a strong alignment with the grant's objectives, including enhanced environmental awareness, the integration of traditional ecological knowledge, and the protection of culturally significant natural resources.

The success of this initiative further underscores the value of forging strong and respectful relationships with Indigenous partners.

The partnership between Conservation Authorities and the Métis Nation of Ontario represents a powerful model of cooperative stewardship rooted in mutual respect, shared values, and a commitment to reconciliation.

Bluegill Stocking, MNR/ CCCA Initiative

A collaborative effort to build a working relationship between the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) and the Ministry of Natural Resources has been created to explore the feasibility of stocking bluegill in Springwater Pond. This partnership marks an important step toward enhancing the ecological and recreational value of the pond while aligning with broader conservation goals. Through open dialogue and shared expertise, both organizations are working together to assess habitat suitability, ensure ecological balance, and follow regulatory guidelines for fish stocking. The goal is to create a healthy and sustainable fishery that supports biodiversity, provides educational opportunities, and enhances the visitor experience at Springwater Conservation Area. The CCCA is excited about the potential of this initiative and views it as a valuable demonstration of how collaborative stewardship can lead to meaningful, community-focused outcomes.

New Director of Conservation Authorities Position

The announcement of the appointment of Hassan Bassit as the new Director of Conservation Authorities was declared in early July. With extensive experience in environmental management and a strong commitment to watershed stewardship, Hassan brings valuable leadership and strategic vision to the role. His proven ability to foster collaboration among diverse stakeholders, combined with a deep understanding of conservation policies and programs, positions him well to advance the goals of Conservation Authorities across the region. We look forward to Hassan's contributions as he works to strengthen partnerships, promote sustainable resource management, and support community-based conservation initiatives.

Windphone Construction

The windphone is a deeply meaningful and symbolic structure that provides a unique space for reflection, healing, and connection with lost loved ones. Originating in Japan, the windphone serves as a quiet, contemplative place where visitors can speak freely into the phone, expressing emotions, memories, or farewells to those who are no longer with them. Recognizing the profound impact such a space can have on mental wellness and community healing, the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority is proud to announce plans to erect a windphone at Springwater Conservation Area. This installation will offer visitors a serene and private setting within the natural landscape to find solace and peace. By integrating this meaningful structure into the conservation area, we aim to enhance the emotional and spiritual value of the space, fostering a deeper connection between people, nature, and the cycles of life. The windphone will serve as a testament to the importance of providing diverse ways for individuals to engage with their grief and healing processes in a supportive environment.

Powerco Relationships

The potential partnership with PowerCo in utilizing conservation areas for work-related events represents a valuable opportunity to strengthen community ties and promote environmental awareness among corporate teams. Hosting events within these natural settings allows PowerCo employees to engage directly with the environment, fostering a deeper appreciation for local ecosystems and conservation efforts. These gatherings also provide a unique venue that encourages teamwork, creativity, and wellness through outdoor activities and learning experiences. By choosing conservation areas for their events, PowerCo not only supports the preservation of green spaces but also demonstrates corporate social responsibility and a commitment to sustainability. This collaboration ultimately would benefit both the organization and the conservation authority by building stronger partnerships and inspiring ongoing stewardship of natural resources.

CORRESPONDENCE:

a) Copied:

- Correspondence Register for June, July and August, 2025.

Motion # 52/2025

G. Clarke

P. Buchner

CARRIED

THAT, the Copied Correspondence and Correspondence Register for the months of June, July and August, 2025, be noted and filed.

CLOSED SESSION:

None

NEXT MEETING / TERMINATION:

The next meeting of the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority will be held on Thursday, November 20, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.


Motion # 53/2025

P. Buchner

A. Oslach

CARRIED

THAT, the Full Authority be terminated at 10:50 a.m.



General Manager / Secretary – Treasurer



Authority Chairperson