

Stewardship Services

The CCCA undertook four restoration projects in 2025 on four private landowners' properties. Projects consisted of wetland habitat restoration, erosion control, native tall grass prairie and septic system improvement. 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, the Elgin Clean Water Program and the Oxford Clean Water Program. CCCA also worked with landowners by providing six letters of support to protect and conserve grassland and wetland habitat. An invasive species removal project was again completed at the Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area in conjunction with the Environmental Leadership Program.



CCCA staff machine planting native tree species

Reforestation

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.

The opportunity to partner with government agencies, local interest groups, and landowners has enabled CCCA staff to develop and implement a more targeted and effective planting strategy focused on Carolinian species. In 2025, approximately 6,800 Carolinian hardwoods, wildlife shrubs, and coniferous trees were planted across various locations within the watershed, contributing to the improvement of forest habitats and the extension of natural wildlife corridors.

Water Management

Climate change poses significant challenges to water resource management with regional impacts that are complex and multifaceted. Southwestern Ontario is characterized by its agricultural productivity, dense population, and proximity to the Great Lakes, and is susceptible (as most areas are) to changes in precipitation extremes, temperature, and water availability. Understanding how climate change influences water resources in this region is crucial for effective Water Resource Management, adverse condition adaptation, and policy development.

Currently a major process through which climate change impacts water resources is the increased acceleration of precipitation extremes. Recent observational research indicates that heavy precipitation events have become more frequent and intense in the present warming climate. The relative humidity dynamic (increased atmospheric moisture capacity) is strong, with observed data showing an increase of intense precipitation events as temperatures rise and accompanying available atmospheric water vapor increases. The physical processes controlling these changes are multilayered.

The intensification of precipitation extremes has direct implications for water resources in southwestern Ontario. More frequent and severe rainfall events increase the risk of urban and agricultural flooding, overwhelming existing drainage, and water management infrastructure. National and regional models project that periods of intense rainfall and accompanying runoff/erosion may be combined with longer and increasingly extreme dry spells, leading to increased variability in water availability. Furthermore, changes in snowfall extremes and the timing of snowmelt (crucial for groundwater recharge, seasonal river flows, and irrigation requirements) are expected to deviate from rainfall trends, further complicating seasonal water resource management.

In 2025, CCCA staff continue to revise the following vital water resource documents, manuals, and plans as outlined in O. Reg. 686/21: Mandatory

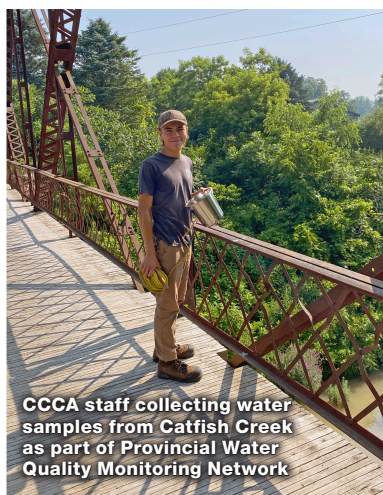
Programs and Services.

- ✓ *Catfish Creek Conservation Authority, Low Water Response Manual.*
- ✓ *Catfish Creek Conservation Authority, Flood Watch and Warning Plan.*
- ✓ *Catfish Creek Conservation Authority, Ice Management Plan.*

CCCA staff continue to develop, examine, and assess water resource models designed to simulate the complete hydrologic processes of a watershed network, to develop and use as a tool for CCCA flood forecasting and integrated resource planning.

In 2025, the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority issued three (3) Lake Erie Watershed Condition Statements, five (5) Water Safety Watershed Condition Statements, one (1) Flood Watch Watershed Condition Statement and one (1) Flood Warning Watershed Condition Statement.

The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority along with its member municipalities and local interest groups continue to take steps to strive and minimize environmental impacts of growth through the adaptation of innovative water management approaches.



CCCA staff collecting water samples from Catfish Creek as part of Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network

Communications

The Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2025, marking a significant milestone since its establishment on February 23, 1950. The CCCA first began with the first elected chair, Archie Coulter, whose leadership helped lay the foundation for decades of conservation efforts. Over the years, CCCA has achieved numerous accomplishments in conservation and has established itself as a vital community asset dedicated to land and water stewardship.

To commemorate this milestone, CCCA hosted a 75th anniversary celebration event that successfully engaged the community. The event featured children's activities, nature-based programs, live music, and speeches from the General Manager. Attendance included representatives from partner municipalities, highlighting the importance of strong partnerships in advancing conservation goals.

Partnerships with the community have been instrumental in fostering a sense of shared responsibility and pride in natural spaces. These collaborations

have contributed to the organization's ongoing success and community support over the past 75 years.

In the past year, CCCA's social media presence demonstrated significant growth and engagement. Content was viewed approximately 1.3 million times, with a 218.5% increase in link clicks and 31,000 visits to social media profiles. Additionally, there was a 7.5% increase in followers across platforms. These insights are valuable for understanding community interests and ensuring that our messaging effectively reaches a broad audience.

Our social media insights are instrumental in helping us get the word out about our conservation areas and CCCA's mandate. They enable us to tailor our communication strategies, promote upcoming events, and increase awareness of conservation efforts. This digital engagement supports our goal of fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of natural spaces and encourages community involvement in conservation initiatives.

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 \$50.00. **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



2025 Partners/Donors/Volunteers

(please notify our office of any errors or omissions)

A1 Unique Installations	Canadian Chestnut Council	Forests Ontario	K&K Locksmith	Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry	Simmons, Mark
Ambrose Plumbing and Heating	Caps Off Run Club	Goodwill Used Cars	Kettle Creek C.A.	Municipality of Central Elgin	Smale, Kim and DJ
Aylmer Express	Casier, Ron	Grand River C.A.	Kitts, Dean	My Tribute Gift	Thames Valley District School Board
Aylmer Optimist Club	City of St. Thomas	Graves, Wendell & Cindy	Koolen Electric	Neville, Belinda	Town of Aylmer
Aylmer Pheasant Club	CJDL	Greenlund, Marion	Lampman, Mary Jane	New Sarum Diner	Township of Malahide
Aylmer Spitfires	Clarke, Justin	Griffin, Shirley	Laur, Kelly	Ontario Police	Township of South-West Oxford
Begg, Ian	Cook, Rick and Linda	Gubbels, Matt & Maria	Lenane, Penni	College - Path of Honour	Tri-County Travellers
Benevity	County of Elgin	H. Broer Equipment	Lindsay, Keith & Sharon	OPP Branch 2	Trojek, Bernadette
Birkby, Scott	Doucet, Michele	H.A. Kebbel Funeral Home	Litt, Gordon	Peacock, James	United Way
Black, Linda and Kim	Dr. Wiltsie Thoonen Vet	Hayhoe, Todd	Lockhead, Betty	Persistence Racing	VanFest
Bode, Paul & Margo	Dyck, Jake & Neta	Heagy, Roger	Lounsbury, Anne	Porter, James	Vinnai, Jesse
Boersma, Debbie	East Elgin SS	Henderson, Debra	Luksys-Vinnai, Loretta	Race Roster	Wagler Mini Barns
Brewer, Tom and Linda	Environmental Leadership Program	Herrington, Victor	Elizabeth	Richer, Gerry	Wallace, Ruth
Buchner, Paul & Ruth	Edward Jones Investments	Hill, Thomas	McPherson, Dave & Mary Lynn	Rimnyak, Bill and Linda	Warden, Randy
Shea, Carrie	Elgin Chrysler	Holmes, Tracey	Mervis, Ron and Lisa	Scott Lewis Auto	Wildeman, Alan
Campbell, Bill	Elgin Stewardship Council	Huron Tractor	Irwin, Bobbi	Shakir, Scott	Williams Funeral Home
Canada Helps.Org	Fick, Donald	Inwood, Shauna	Irwin, Sylvia	Sharpe, Allan	Wilson Well Drilling
Canada Summer Jobs		Jaar Material	Jakob, Joseph	Siemens, Megan	WJ Roofing
Finegan, Joan					Yake, Richard
					Yarmouth Group

Thanks to the following businesses for their support toward the printing of the 2025 Annual Report:



CATFISH CREEK CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
8079 Springwater Rd., R.R.#5, Aylmer, ON N5H 2R4
PHONE: 519-773-9037 EMAIL: communications@catfishcreek.ca WEBSITE: www.catfishcreek.ca



2025 Annual Report

Photo Rebecca Seelye

100% Recyclable — Printed on recycled paper using vegetable oil based inks

Chairperson's Message

Blights, bugs, extreme weather - these events are external to a balanced ecosystem... right until they're not. Once introduced, they forever change it: often punishing certain species, sometimes calling on others to fill new niches and be relied upon in new and different ways. Like these natural forces, external legislative forces can touch and forever change our governance ecosystem.

This past year has tested Catfish Creek Conservation Authority in both expected and unexpected ways. We entered the fiscal cycle mindful of a much-needed levy restructuring that required careful planning, clear budgeting, and difficult conversations with municipal partners. At the same time, provincial proposals to amalgamate conservation authorities across Ontario introduced uncertainty into our governance and planning environment. These forces — external to our operations yet deeply impactful — called on us to remember our mission, to advocate with clarity and unity, and to lead with resilience.

Through it all, the heart of our watershed community beat strong. We saw a record turnout at our sugar bush operations, where families, volunteers, and so many first-time visitors deepened their connection to land, history, and nourishment. Our team worked to extend our camping season, welcoming campers to enjoy our space through a wider show of seasons. These accomplishments are more than numbers — they reflect understanding of the love for this land that we share with our community, and optimism for our continued growth in whatever context may come.

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

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
Noah Pineau	Field Technician
Jennifer McDaniel	Customer Services Outreach Clerk

And our many seasonal staff, summer students and volunteers.



None of this would be possible without the dedication, professionalism, and innovation of our staff, both new and returning. I admire their willingness to adapt to changing circumstances, to expand programs, and to maintain high standards of service throughout. They represent the very best of what a community-based conservation authority can be.

As a board, we remain committed to sound governance, responsible stewardship, and strategic partnerships that strengthen our capacity to protect the natural heritage of our watershed.

To our municipal partners, thank you for your leadership and trust. To our staff, thank you for your daily contributions. To the residents of our watershed, thank you for your support and enthusiasm. Together, we are building a resilient future for Catfish Creek and for the generations who will follow.

Thank you.

Morgaine Griffin
Chairperson



Conservation Lands

In 2025, the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) focused its conservation land efforts on enhancing our Conservation Areas, with an emphasis on initiatives promoting accessibility, awareness, and appreciation of nature across all lands owned and managed by the Conservation Authority. We also celebrated a milestone, marking the CCCA's 75th anniversary.

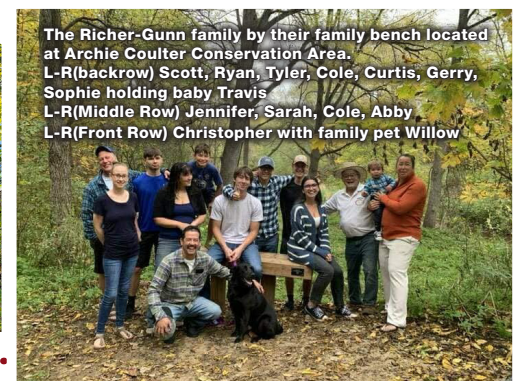
Throughout the watershed, improving ecological health, fostering appreciation for nature, and ensuring our lands are protected and enhanced remain at the forefront of our activities. Thanks to the generous financial support from various local and private organizations, government agencies, and our many community partners, the following projects were undertaken on CCCA-owned lands in 2025.

We completed two (2) job placements through Canada Summer Jobs, including one Metis grant student placement. Co-operative education placements were provided to students from East Elgin Secondary School and Glendale Secondary School in Tillsonburg. The CCCA has longstanding relationships with its local secondary schools, fostering excellent co-op placement experiences, as well as 26 years of collaboration with the Environmental Leadership Program (ELP).

Several special events were held at the Springwater Conservation Area in 2025, including:

- The Trout Derby, operated from April through May, featuring three tagged trout worth \$100 each.
- Recognition of Zaps Tree Service for their support through a \$2,000 donation toward trout stocking at Springwater CA, with volunteering efforts acknowledged by Tri County Travellers.
- Vanfest, Canada's largest premier van and truck show, held in June, which drew attendees from across Canada and the United States, breaking records.
- The London Canine Association returned to Springwater CA for their dog show.
- Persistence Racing hosted their annual fall cross-country racing event.
- The Christmas Spirit Walk was held in December, with assistance from the Elgin Hiking Trail Club.
- The Day Use Area hosted numerous weddings, family picnics, and company events.
- We collaborated with Heron Land & Water Adventures, who used Springwater CA as their basecamp for ORCKA Canoe courses.

In June, we hosted a 75th Anniversary Celebration featuring numerous activities throughout the day and evening, including vendors, wagon rides, demonstrations by the Malahide Fire Department, canoe and kayak rentals for the public, a bouncy castle, food trucks, live music, and an open mic event the following day.



Continual support was provided to the Memorial Path of Honor at the Ontario Police College. This year, only general maintenance was completed, as no trees needed to be planted as memorials or replaced following the death of trees.

CCCA continued to grant research permits for work in our various Conservation Areas to organizations such as the University of Guelph, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), and Bird Studies Canada. Annual tick dragging was conducted by Southwestern Public Health.

Tisdale Conservation Area is now officially open to the public, featuring a walking trail around the perimeter through a small section of forest above the south shore of Catfish Creek. The trail connects to the top portion of Archie Coulter Conservation Area. We also continued additional assessments, including understory and flora inventories, as well as a forest stand inventory. The prairie is filling in nicely, with abundant growth throughout the area.

CCCA installed a bench at Archie Coulter, overlooking Catfish Creek, donated by the Richer Family, providing visitors with a place to sit and enjoy scenic views along the trail and creek.

The East Campground pay station has continued to operate effectively, boosting revenue from day passes. This has allowed Springwater CA to reallocate staff to other tasks, only manning the gate during busy event weekends or periods of high transient camping. The CCCA also continued working with Uplink Communications to install internet services for seasonal and transient campers, including optional Wi-Fi access during events held at Springwater CA. With approval from the Board of Directors, both shoulder and winter camping have been authorized in the east campground.

Numerous workdays were organized with the Environmental Leadership Program (ELP) class, involving removal of invasive trees and shrubs from the berm at the Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area (YNHA) to maintain berm integrity, as well as removal of Phragmites seed heads to slow seed dispersal.

Additional activities included:

- Continued woodlot management with the ELP class at Archie Coulter and Johnson Track, following up with chainsaw certification.
- Assistance from the ELP class in building and installing a beaver baffle at Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area.
- Preparation work for the Spirit Walk and Maple Syrup Festival, including firewood processing and cleanup with ELP students.

Hazard tree removal and inspections, as well as trail maintenance, were ongoing throughout the conservation areas to ensure safe trails for users.

General Manager/ Secretary Treasurer Remarks

The year 2025 was a milestone in the history of the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority, marking 75 years of watershed stewardship, community partnerships, and environmental leadership. Throughout the year, the Authority delivered high-impact programs, strengthened essential services, and continued to protect the natural heritage and safety of our watershed communities.

This year's celebrations at Springwater Conservation Area showcased the resilience and spirit of our organization. The 75th Anniversary event, alongside signature programs such as VanFest, the Maple Syrup Program, and the return of the Forest Festival, brought thousands of residents and visitors together to explore, learn, and connect with nature form both near and afar. These events reaffirmed the importance of our conservation lands as places of education, recreation, and community well-being.

2025 also saw the introduction of meaningful and innovative additions to our programming. The Wind Phone installation created a reflective, healing space for visitors, demonstrating that conservation lands support not only ecological health but also emotional and mental wellness. Our expanded Marsh Quest program invited students and families into hands-on wetland exploration, deepening awareness of water, wildlife, and the interconnectedness of a healthy watershed.

Alongside these public-facing successes, the CCCA continued to deliver critical watershed-management services. Staff monitored water levels, issued hazard and safety advisories, maintained conservation area infrastructure, restored habitats, and ensured compliance with environmental regulations. These efforts, quiet but essential, are the backbone of our mandate to protect people, property, and natural resources.

Financial stewardship remained strong throughout 2025. Despite rising operational costs and uncertainties in the broader legislative environment, the Authority maintained a responsible budget framework that enabled continued investment in education, trail improvements, hazard monitoring, and community programming. Efficient operations, strong controls, and long-standing partnerships continue to support our long-term resilience.

However, the year was also marked by significant concern surrounding the Province's proposal to amalgamate Ontario's conservation authorities into much larger regional entities. The CCCA has been clear in its position: amalgamation

Environmental Education

Environmental educators completed another successful year of programming. The Authority welcomed a variety of ages and grade levels 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 2025, the Maple Syrup Festival attracted 3,786 attendees. The Authority staff conducted 10 days (including one rain day) of elementary school programming (TVDSB and LCDSB), reaching a total of 526 students from JK to Grade 4. The CCCA also ran Maple Syrup programs outside of TVDSB, with a total of 345 students attending.
- St. Thomas YMCA continued to host their summer camps at Springwater Conservation Area for two separate weeks during the summer, with approximately 20-25 children attending each week.
- The CCCA also hosted two separate summer camps in July and August, with a total of 40 youth participating at Springwater Conservation Area. During these

is not in the best interest of our watershed, nor the communities that depend on us. The Catfish Creek watershed is small, complex, and highly localized, its challenges, flood patterns, habitats, land uses, and community partnerships are unique. Effective watershed management relies on local expertise, built over decades of working directly with landowners, farmers, municipalities, service clubs, schools, and community organizations.

A regional "super-authority" risks replacing this local knowledge with distant, generalized oversight that may not understand the nuances of our terrain, watercourses, and community needs. Under amalgamation, decisions affecting Catfish Creek could be made by a board and staff located far outside the watershed, responsible for dozens of other regions and priorities. This would inevitably lead to slower response times, reduced on-the-ground presence, and less ability to tailor programs from flood alerts and hazard planning to land management, recreation, and environmental education. Our success, reflected in programs like the Wind Phone, Marsh Quest, the Forest Festival, the Maple Syrup Program, VanFest, and 75 years of place-based stewardship is rooted in local knowledge, local relationships, and local governance. A centralized regional structure risks weakening the very qualities that make our watershed management effective responsiveness, familiarity with local conditions, and deep community connection.

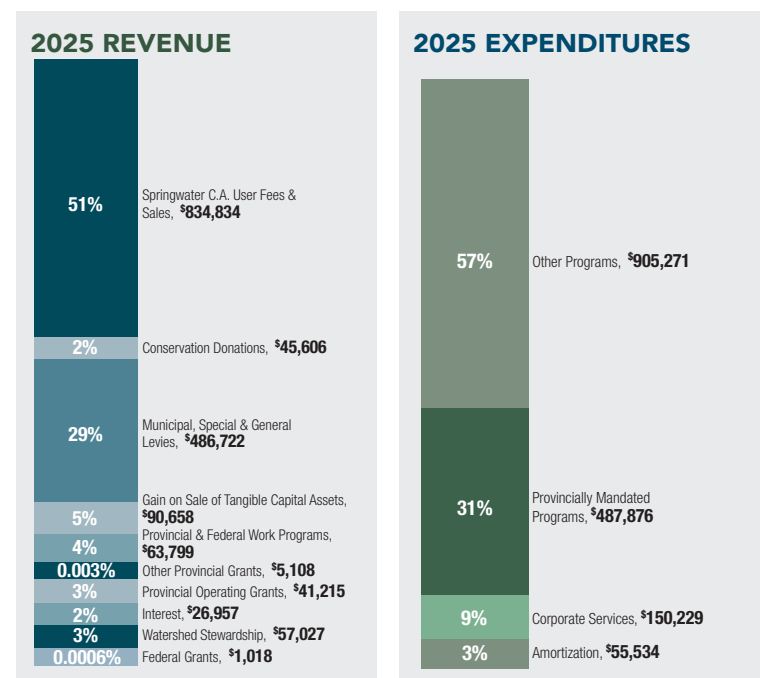
We remain actively engaged in consultations, advocating strongly for the protection of local decision-making and the continued independence of watershed-based conservation.

As we look ahead, the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority remains committed to safeguarding the landscapes, watercourses, habitats, and community programs that define our region. Our accomplishments in 2025 reflect the dedication of our staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, municipal partners, and the residents who support us.

Together, we will continue to protect and enhance the Catfish Creek watershed for the next 75 years and beyond.

**Yours in nature,
Dusty Underhill**

2025 Financial Report



Copies of the full 2025 Audited Financial Statements may be obtained by contacting the Authority Administration Centre.

Environmental Planning

In 2025, CCCA 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 CCCA's core mandates continues to be the delivery of programs and services to protect public safety and property damage in proximity to Natural Hazards such as flooding, erosion, shorelines and wetlands.

Staff from the CCCA reviewed and provided comments on the following

development applications, inquiries and land use planning applications in 2025; over 50 Planning Act applications including severances, minor variances, zone change applications, and subdivision and condominium official plan amendments. Staff also provided professional input in regard to 40 inquiries from landowners, consultants, and real estate agents. Issued 46 permits, authorizations, or letters of opinion. Furthermore, CCCA staff successfully met and surpassed the provincial timelines for regulatory permitting and planning approvals.

