



2024 Annual Report



A Message from Our Chair

I am pleased to present you with the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority's 2024 Annual Report. In my second term as Chair, I have been impressed by the continued commitment and dedication of our staff and Board in implementing services and programs that enhance the environmental health of our watershed and benefit our local communities.

Over the last year, efforts focused on completing the Conservation Lands Strategy and Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy, both due to the provincial government by the end of 2024. I want to thank our staff for their work in drafting these documents and organizing public and Indigenous engagement. The documents provide guidance, objectives, and direction for decision making as it pertains to Authority property, services, and programs. Both strategies were approved by our Board and can be found on the SCRCA's website.

We saw the continued success of our programs in 2024 which included planting over 73,000 trees, issuing over 300 permits for development, engaging 12,000 students in conservation education, and protecting 600 metres of shoreline along Lake Huron and the St. Clair River from erosion, among many others.

The year ended with a historical investment made by the Canada Water Agency that will see \$7.85 million over four years invested into the SCRCA to help in the fight against algal blooms in Lake Erie. The funding allowed the Authority to launch the Sydenham Phosphorus Reduction Initiative (SPRI) that aims to reduce the loading of phosphorus in the Sydenham River, and ultimately, Lake Erie. While an essential nutrient to life, excess phosphorus in our waterways is the leading cause of algal blooms in our region. I look forward to seeing how this new initiative unfolds over the next four years, and the difference it will make to the health of both the St. Clair and Lake Erie watersheds.

I wish to thank our staff and board for their hard work over the past year, and our many partners, collaborators, donors, and funders whose support helps us move forward in realizing our vision of a healthy and sustainable natural environment in the St. Clair Region.



Pat Brown
Chair, Board of Directors
St. Clair Region Conservation



The SCRCA Board of Directors take a group picture in front of the St. Clair Township Municipal Building after spending the morning touring the watershed during the 2024 Bus Tour held in June.



2024 Board of Directors

Township of Adelaide Metcalfe

Betty Ann MacKinnon

Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston

Don McCabe

Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Rhonda Jubenville

Aaron Hall

Township of Dawn-Euphemia

Alan Broad

Township of Enniskillen/ Village of Oil Springs

Mary Lynne McCallum

Municipality of Lambton Shores

Lorie Scott

Municipality of Middlesex Centre

Sue Cates

Town of Petrolia

Ross O'Hara

Town of Plympton-Wyoming

Kristen Rodrigues

Village of Point Edward

Greg Grimes

City of Sarnia

Terry Burrell

Anne Marie Gillis

Adam Kilner

Municipality of Southwest Middlesex/ Village of Newbury

Don McCallum

Township of St. Clair

Pat Brown

Steve Miller

Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc

John Brennan

Frank Kennes

Township of Warwick

Jerry Westgate

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Emery Huszka

About Us

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) is one of Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities responsible for the conservation, restoration, and management of natural resources within its watershed. The St. Clair Region includes the Sydenham River watershed and smaller watersheds that drain directly into southern Lake Huron, the St. Clair River, and northeastern Lake St. Clair.

Our programs aim to 1) reduce the risk of life and property from flooding and erosion; 2) improve water quality; 3) promote habitat creation and stewardship; 4) provide outdoor recreation opportunities; 5) increase environmental awareness and literacy; and 6) monitor and protect our most vulnerable species. We achieve this in cooperation and partnership with our member municipalities, government agencies, Indigenous communities, community groups, local landowners, and businesses.



Spanning 4,130 km², the St. Clair Region Watershed supports a population of 145,509. The primary land use is agriculture (81%) with major urban centres located in Sarnia, Strathroy, and Wallaceburg (pictured).



An excavator works on the construction of an armour stone revetment as part of a shoreline protection project along Lake Huron.

Water Resources

Our water resources team oversees the SCRCA flood forecasting and warning program, and the maintenance and operation of flood control structures, including the W. Darcy McKeough Floodway. We work closely with local municipalities to protect public infrastructure through shoreline protection works. Our team also administers the Drinking Water Source Protection program for the St. Clair Region which protects municipal sources of drinking water from contamination. Lastly, our water resources department monitors and reports on Great Lakes water levels and conducts groundwater sampling on behalf of the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks.

Erosion Control Projects

Erosion control projects are organized and managed by the SCRCA in collaboration with shoreline municipalities to protect critical infrastructure from erosion caused by high water levels and extreme waves triggered by strong storm events. In 2024, approximately \$4.5 million in funding was secured through the federal Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund, provincial Water & Erosion Control Infrastructure Fund, the City of Sarnia, and St. Clair Township to support shoreline protection projects along the Lake Huron (Pine Avenue to Penhuron Street) and St. Clair River (Seagar Park) shorelines.

Groundwater Monitoring

In an effort to better understand Ontario's groundwater resources, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks implemented the Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network (PGMN) to monitor water quality and quantity in local wells. The Network is a cooperative effort of the Conservation Authorities in Ontario on behalf of the Ministry. The SCRCA monitors nine groundwater wells for water levels and eight groundwater wells for water quality as part of this program. The data gathered are reported in the Authority's Watershed Report Card, released every five years.

SCRCA staff spend approximately 10 days a year sampling and collecting data from groundwater wells as part of the PGMN program. Pictured is the equipment used to collect water samples and measure well water levels to determine local groundwater quantity and quality.



Drinking Water Source Protection

Residents living in the SCRCA watershed are protected from significant drinking water threats through the administration of the Thames-Sydenham and Region Source Water Protection Plan. The SCRCA houses a Risk Management Official/Inspector who works with local communities, industries, and municipalities to ensure risks to drinking water are identified and mitigated. The Risk Management Services office continues to provide contracted support to municipalities in the Lambton and Chatham-Kent areas, maintaining compliance with the provincial Drinking Water Source Protection Program. Annual inspections continue in the region for existing managed threats along with ongoing review and screening for any potential or new threats.

Flood Operations

Flooding is a natural process and while the Authority has done much to reduce the risk to life and property, some flooding in developed and undeveloped areas is still inevitable. As such, the SCRCA operates a flood warning program designed to warn municipalities of flood conditions. Through a network of 11 stream gauges, five snow sampling sites, ice monitoring, and meteorological data, our staff monitor ice and streamflow conditions, and issue bulletins should a flood be imminent. There were 13 events in 2024 that resulted in 27 bulletins issued for the St. Clair Region watershed.

The Authority also monitors the watershed using Low Water Indicators to determine whether drought conditions exist. In a drought situation, the Authority meets with the Low Water Response Committee to issue a Level I, II, or III Low Water Condition. No Low Water Conditions were issued in 2024.

2024 Flood Bulletins

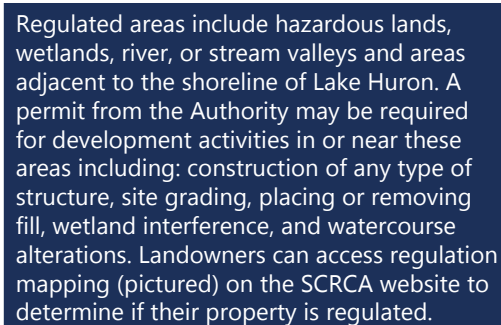
Normal Conditions	
No flood conditions exist	
Shoreline Conditions Statement	
Water Safety	Flood Outlook
Shoreline danger due to high water levels, wave action and erosion	Early notice of potential flooding along shorelines
0	
Watershed Conditions Statement	
Water Safety	Flood Outlook
River danger due to fast flows and unstable banks	Early notice of potential riverine flooding
16	
Flood Watch	
Potential for flooding in some municipalities	
8	
Flood Warning	
Flooding is imminent or occurring	
3	

New water level sensor installed at the Head Street Dam in Strathroy.



Enhancing Monitoring Capacity throughout the St. Clair Region Watershed

The SCRCA was successful in securing \$25,000 through the provincial Community Emergency Preparedness Grant to expand the current stream gauge network throughout the watershed. The Authority was able to acquire 14 water level sensors which will be used in conjunction with current stream gauges to improve early warning communication to member municipalities during flood conditions.



As a watershed management agency acting under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, the SCRCa is responsible for ensuring that development activity is directed outside of areas prone to flooding, erosion, dynamic beaches, unstable soil, and bedrock. Under *Ontario Regulation 41/24, "Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits"*, staff review applications for development activities within regulated areas, to ensure that the activity is not likely to affect these hazards or create conditions which could jeopardize the health and safety of persons or result in the damage or destruction of property. In addition, the SCRCa assists our member municipalities with review of Planning applications made under the *Planning Act* to ensure that the proposals adhere to the natural hazard policies identified in the Provincial Planning Statement (2024).

Inquiries	97
Active Files	191
Application Types (Note: Active files may have multiple applications)	252
Minor Variances	41
Severances	48
Site Plan	27
Subdivision/Condominium	38
Zoning By-law	71
Official Plan	27

Regulations Activity 2024

Legal Inquiries	58
Permits Issued under Ontario Regulation 41/24	305
Inquiries under Ontario Regulation 41/24	417
Compliance/Enforcement Matters under Ontario Regulation 41/24	40
Hearings	2

Drainage Act and Section 28 Regulations Team (DART) Protocol Activity 2024

Total Drainage Projects Reviewed	134
Standard Compliance Requirements (SCRs) Issued	56

2024 Regulations Review and Timelines

Conservation Authority Mapping Review:

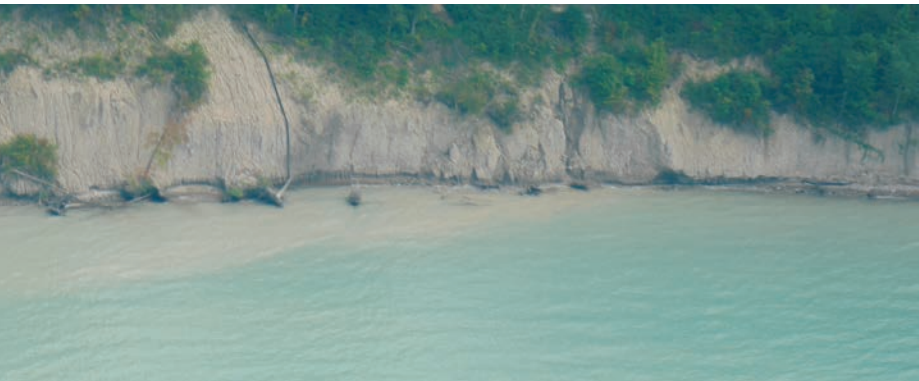
SCRCA mapping is available online at www.scrca.on.ca and is reviewed on an annual basis and site-specific basis to make appropriate changes based on site-specific hazards or updated elevation information.

Permit Review Timelines:

- Total Permits Issued (Apr-Dec): 196
- Notification of Complete Applications*: 135
- Total Permits Issued within 30 days of Complete Application: 148
- Average Permit Timeline for 2024: 22 days
- Administrative Reviews: 0

**Notification of complete application within 21 days of receiving required information in Section 7(1) of O.R. 41/24. For this annual report, this is reflective of applications made to the SCRCA from April to December 2024, as this is when the regulation change came into effect.*

On April 1, 2024, the provincial government enacted Ontario Regulation 41/24 – “Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits” which revoked all 36 Conservation Authorities’ individual regulations and consolidated them into one. While the SCRCA will continue to require permit applications for development within regulated areas, several regulatory changes were enacted. Of note were changes to the definition of a watercourse, reduction of the regulatory area surrounding Provincially Significant Wetlands, new service standard requirements for reviewing permit applications, exemptions for certain development activities, and enhanced Ministerial powers relating to Conservation Authority issued (or non-issued) permits. The SCRCA is working closely with Conservation Ontario and other Conservation Authorities to ensure policies and other guiding documents are created and updated promptly to comply with the new regulatory framework.





Every year, SCRC biologists spend months in the field collecting data to monitor the ecological health of the St. Clair Region watershed.

Biological Monitoring

The Sydenham River, located within the St. Clair Region, is recognized provincially, nationally, and even internationally for its biodiversity. SCRC biologists work with government agencies and non-profit organizations to monitor populations of local aquatic and terrestrial species (including Species at Risk) throughout the Sydenham River watershed and the smaller watersheds that make up the St. Clair Region. Staff also collect important data (e.g., water quality, benthic invertebrates) to assess the health of local habitats and overall watershed health. This data is used by both the SCRC and our partners to help guide policy development, prioritize research efforts, and implement rehabilitation and protection measures.



Benthic invertebrates are collected by kicking sediment and sweeping a D-net along river bottoms. The animals retrieved can be used to deduce water quality based on the pollution tolerance of the organisms collected.

Water Quality Monitoring

Every year, the SCRC monitors local water quality through the chemical analysis of surface water samples collected from 21 sites throughout the watershed and the collection and identification of bottom-dwelling biological indicators (benthic invertebrates) from 14 sites. In 2024, 171 surface water samples were collected and analyzed for nutrients, *E. coli*, and metals, in addition to 28 benthic invertebrate samples. Water quality data is shared with partner agencies and organizations and reported on in our Watershed Report Card, released every five years.

Drain Classification

The St. Clair Region watershed is home to over 3,400 kilometres of municipal drains that serve important functions for both the agricultural community and municipalities. They also serve as habitat for an array of native fish. On behalf of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), the SCRC Biology Department samples drains throughout the watershed to support the classification of drains as part of the Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program. The program ensures fish and fish habitat are protected by issuing permits for drain maintenance activities (e.g., cleanouts) based on the drain's sensitivity to disturbance (classification). The SCRC collected 489 fishes, representing 16 species from 6 unclassified drains in 2024 to support the streamlining of DFOs drain maintenance review and authorization mandate.

North Sydenham Mussel and Host Fishes Inventory

The Sydenham River is one of the most biodiverse rivers in Canada. It is home to at least 82 of the 129 native freshwater fish species found in Ontario and has the greatest diversity of freshwater mussels in all of Canada. With funding provided by DFO's Habitat Stewardship Program, the SCRC entered the second year of a new freshwater mussel and fish sampling program where fish and mussel information was collected in previously un-sampled streams to continue filling knowledge gaps related to Species at Risk (SAR) distribution and population. Building upon the sampling completed in 2023, sampling efforts in 2024 focused on the headwaters of Bear Creek (10 sites, covering a 5 km continuous stretch of the river). Six species of mussels were recorded, and 1970 fishes were collected, identified, and released, representing 17 different species. The goal of the three-year project is to aid species recovery while simultaneously implementing stewardship projects and providing education and outreach opportunities to mitigate threats and raise awareness of aquatic SAR.

Captive Hatch and Release Turtle Program

The St. Clair Region watershed is home to six of eight different species of turtle found in Ontario – all of which are considered Species at Risk. The SCRC's Captive Hatch and Release program aims to increase turtle hatchling survivorship by eliminating threats to turtle eggs posed by nest predation, shoreline development, and human activities. Efforts focus on the collection and incubation of eggs laid by the Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle – an endangered species at imminent risk of extinction. The 2024 program saw the collection of 1,864 eggs from at-risk nests throughout the watershed and the release of 1,460 turtle hatchlings back into the wild. However, the 2024 nesting season on the Sydenham River was heavily impacted by intense flooding. Key nesting sites along the river were submerged for weeks, resulting in limited site availability, hundreds of drowned eggs and a significant reduction in Spiny Softshell hatchlings compared to previous years.

Eastern Foxsnake Nesting Network

The Eastern Foxsnake Nesting Network established in 2013 provides nesting habitat for at-risk snakes within the watershed. The network has increased overtime and now provides habitat at 21 sites, with 6 new structures installed in 2024. SCRC Biologists located 48 hatched Eastern Foxsnake eggs during the 2024 surveys.

Ontario is home to 41 of the 55 freshwater mussel species native to Canada. The Sydenham River supports 34 of these species, making it the most mussel diverse watershed in the country. The SCRC identifies, measures and counts mussels found throughout the watershed before returning them back into the river they were found.

2024 Highlights



Fish Monitoring

- 24 fish species**
- 2 invasive species**
 - Goldfish X Carp
 - Round Goby
- 1 species at risk**
 - Blackstripe Topminnow



Mussel Monitoring

- 6 mussel species**
 - Creeper
 - Cylindrical Papershell
 - Fatmucket
 - Giant Floater
 - Wabash Pigtoe
 - White Heelsplitter



Turtle Program

- 1,460 turtle hatchlings**
 - 302 Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtles
 - 258 Northern Map Turtles
 - 848 Snapping Turtles
 - 27 Midland Painted Turtles
 - 25 Red-eared Slider Turtles (invasive)





A two-tiered wetland created in the Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston. The wetland will collect overland runoff from over 40.5 hectares (100 acres) of agricultural land.

Stewardship and Forestry

The SCRCA promotes and supports activities that will create healthy watersheds and improve local water quality and soil health. Conservation Authority staff achieve this by providing educational opportunities, technical advice, and financial assistance to local landowners interested in establishing Best Management Practices (BMPs) and stewardship projects on their properties, such as tree planting and wetland creation. The SCRCA also offers several forestry services to promote sustainable woodlot practices.

Environmental Stewardship

Environmental stewardship projects are completed annually throughout the St. Clair Region watershed to improve and protect rural water quality and soil health. SCRCA staff actively seek grants to provide funding to support the efforts of local landowners. In 2024, \$645,727 in grant funding was secured to support 76 projects, with participating landowners contributing an additional \$200,691. In total, over 35 hectares of agricultural land (valued at approximately \$2,281,600) were taken out of production by local landowners to allow for the implementation of stewardship projects.

In honour of the County of Lambton's 175th anniversary, the SCRCA helped plant 175 tulip trees at the Oil Museum of Canada alongside County and Enbridge staff.



2024 Stewardship Projects

34 tree planting projects (33 hectares)

8 wetland projects (2 hectares)

5 erosion control projects (68 total berms)

34 cover crop projects (1,846 hectares)



Tree Planting

Tree planting completed by the SCRC in 2024 saw 71,690 seedlings and 1,747 large-stock trees planted throughout the St. Clair Region watershed. A total of 66,300 tree seedlings were planted by SCRC seasonal staff on 34 properties. Large-stock trees and the remaining 5,390 seedling trees were provided to local landowners and municipalities for plantations, windbreaks, and roadside plantings, among others.

Tree Seed Collection

Every fall, SCRC staff collect seeds from native trees throughout the watershed. These seeds grow into trees that will be used in future afforestation projects in the St. Clair Region to ensure the trees produced are genetically adapted to our local growing conditions. Seed collection in 2024 saw a variety of native tree seeds collected. A total of 2,200 litres were collected from 8 different tree species throughout the watershed. The seeds collected in 2024 will contribute to afforestation projects in 2026, 2027, and 2028.

Acorns ready to be collected from a red oak tree.

Lambton County Woodlands Conservation By-Law

Since 2011, the SCRC has partnered with the County of Lambton and has provided professional forestry services in administering the County of Lambton Woodlands Conservation By-Law. The by-law aims to encourage good forestry practices among County woodland owners to ensure sustainable harvesting and maintenance. While enforcement of the by-law can occur for unauthorized woodland removals, etc., the SCRC also implements an educational component to engage landowners on the environmental and social benefits of woodlands and best management practices to promote the preservation of tree cover within the County.



Introducing SPRI - The Sydenham Phosphorus Reduction Initiative

The Sydenham River watershed is the third largest Canadian contributor of phosphorus loads in the Lake Erie Basin, with close to 90% of total phosphorus released annually from widespread sources including agricultural and rural runoff.

Thanks to a historic investment of \$7.85 million over four years from the Canada Water Agency, the SCRC was able to launch SPRI – the Sydenham Phosphorus Reduction Initiative, a program aimed at reducing phosphorus loading in the Sydenham River, and ultimately, Lake Erie.

SPRI was built off the Sydenham River Watershed Phosphorus Management Plan which improved the overall understanding of local sources of phosphorus, identified cost-effective solutions specific to the St. Clair Region watershed, and built awareness throughout the community. The new SPRI initiative will aim to decrease overall non-point source phosphorus loads in the Sydenham River watershed and St. Clair River tributaries by adopting and implementing agricultural and rural best management practices, strategic water quality monitoring, and outreach, engagement, and education.



SYDENHAM
PHOSPHORUS REDUCTION INITIATIVE

1

Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Adopt a system-based approach to agricultural and stewardship BMPs

2

Strategic Monitoring

Create a sampling network to track and quantify phosphorus movement and the impact SPRI has on reducing phosphorus

3

Outreach and Education

Deliver a strong, diverse, and inclusive communication campaign to foster collaborations, partnerships, and co-benefits



A.W. Campbell Conservation Area located in Alvinston, Ontario.

Conservation Areas

The SCRCA owns and maintains 13 Conservation Areas that span a total of 605 hectares throughout the watershed. In addition, the SCRCA manages seven natural areas for Lambton County. Visitors can enjoy numerous recreational activities that include hiking along our over 40 km of trails, camping at our three regional campgrounds, fishing, and bird watching

Camping at the Authority's three campgrounds (A.W. Campbell, Lorne C. Henderson, and Warwick Conservation Areas) were a popular destination for campers near and far, bringing in over \$1.6M in gross revenue. Seasonal camping was once again fully booked for the 2024 season.

SCRCA Conservation Lands Strategy

Legislative requirements under the Conservation Authorities Act required the SCRCA to prepare a Conservation Lands Strategy prior to the end of the calendar year that would provide a clear set of objectives to inform decision-making related to land owned and managed by the SCRCA. After public and Indigenous engagement, including three open houses, and online submission of comments, the Board of Directors approved the strategy at their December meeting. The document outlines Conservation Land Management guidelines for each of the four types of conservation land classes currently owned and managed by the SCRCA (Conservation Areas Active Recreation, Conservation Areas Passive Recreation, Management Lands, and Administration Areas). The guidelines will assist staff in prioritizing future improvements and upgrades to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

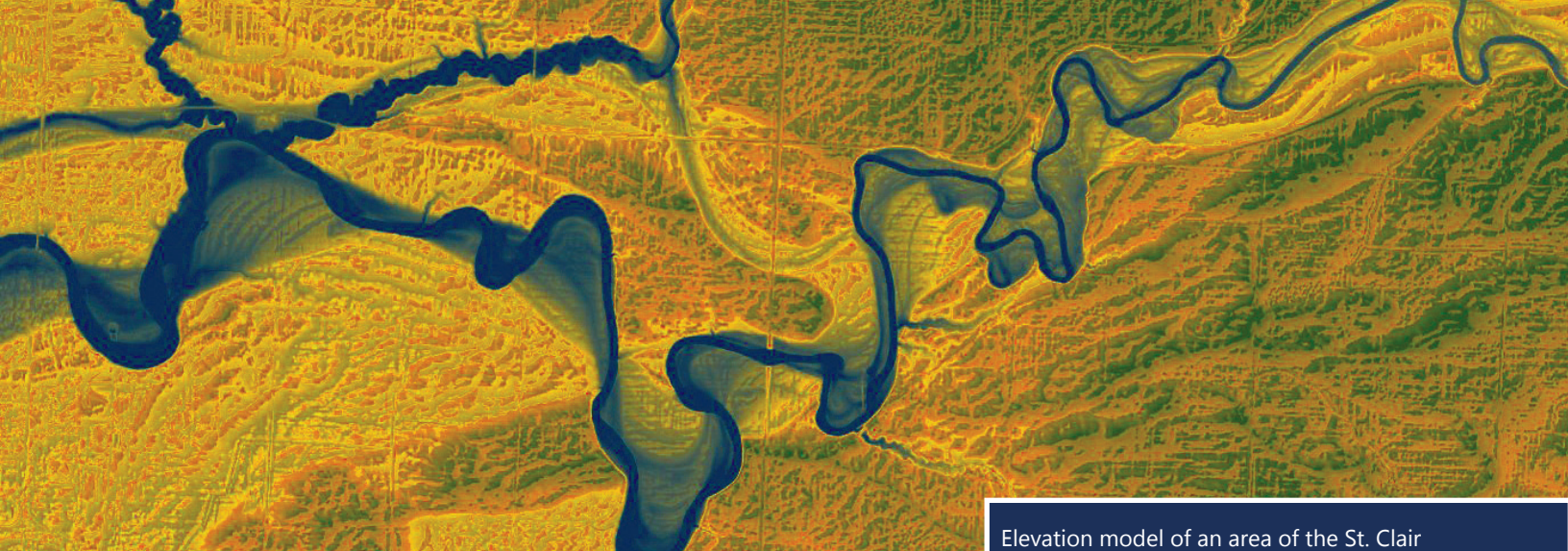
Judith and Norman Alix Foundation Supports Trails and Playground Enhancements at Two Conservation Areas

A donation of \$172,500 from the Judith and Norman Alix Foundation supported trail and playground improvements at the Wawanosh Wetland and Warwick Conservation Areas.

In the fall of 2024, the SCRCA was able to create a new 500-metre trail loop at Warwick Conservation Area and upgrade the 2,000-metre south trail loop at Wawanosh Wetland Conservation Area to stone dust. Additionally, a brand new, natural playground replaced a small aging playground at Warwick Conservation Area. The generous contribution of the Judith and Norman Alix Foundation has helped improve visitor experience and accessibility at both properties.

New natural playground installed at Warwick Conservation Area thanks to funding provided by the Judith and Norman Alix Foundation.

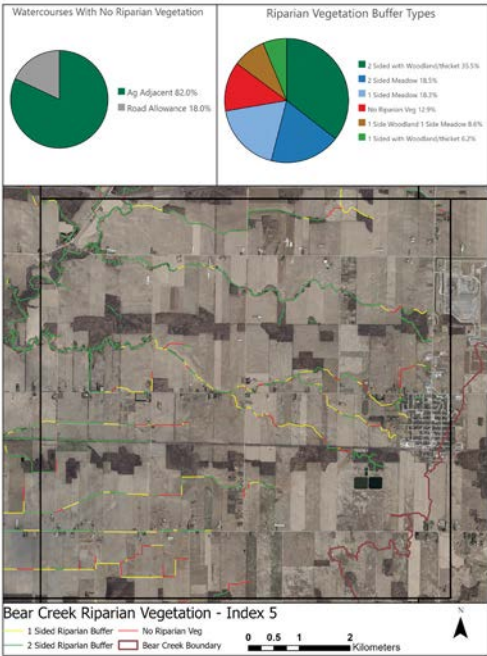




Elevation model of an area of the St. Clair Region watershed.

GIS and IT

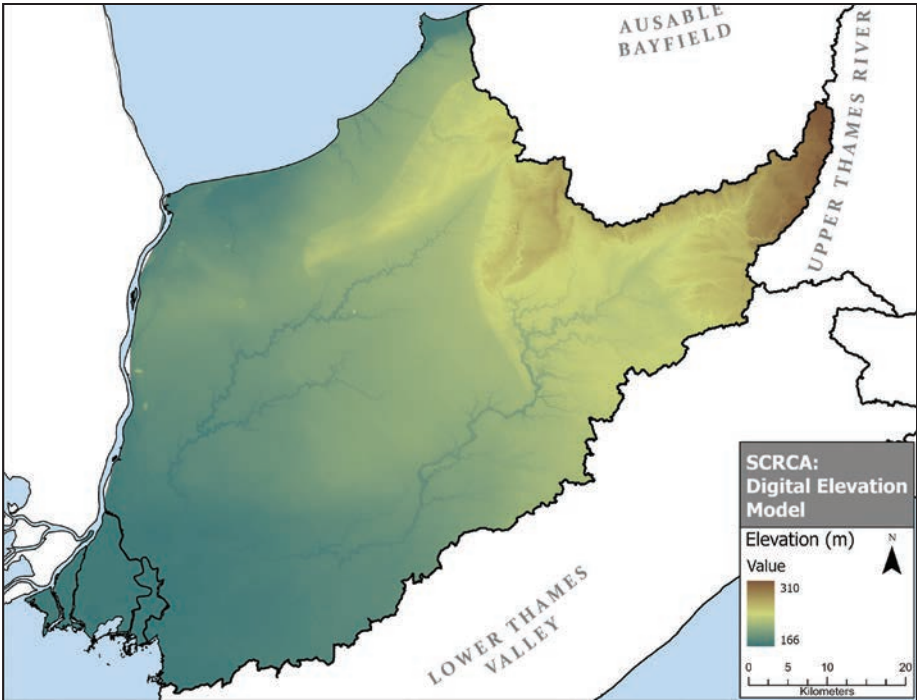
Our Geographic Information System (GIS) and Information Technology (IT) experts provide essential support services to all SCRCA departments and programs. In addition to maintaining important technological infrastructure (i.e., computers, servers), our GIS and IT staff create, update, and manipulate geographic data into a form that other departments and programs can easily comprehend and utilize. Our GIS/IT staff also research and investigate new and exciting technologies to improve efficiencies within the Authority.



Map of riparian buffer status along watercourses in the Bear Creek subwatershed.

2024 GIS Project Highlights

The SCRCA is leveraging GIS technology to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) as part of the Sydenham Phosphorous Reduction Initiative (SPRI). The GIS team has embarked on a project to map and prioritize areas within the Sydenham Headwater, Bear Creek, and Brown Creek subwatersheds, aiming to identify riparian zones lacking vegetation. Additionally, other GIS models, such as the Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF), are being utilized to pinpoint specific opportunities for conservation discussions and BMP implementation.



Digital Elevation Model (DEM) of the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority watershed with higher elevations shown in red/orange and lower elevations identified in yellow/green.



Elementary students participate in Land-based Ed programming. Captured here are students hand-feeding chickadees during a snowshoeing adventure

Education and Outreach

Education is an important part of shaping tomorrow’s environmental leaders and teaching communities about local conservation efforts. Our conservation education program offers a variety of hands-on, curriculum-based, indoor, and outdoor programs geared towards both elementary and secondary school students. Local media outlets and social media are utilized to enhance and expand conservation awareness throughout the St. Clair Region watershed and beyond. Additionally, staff organize and attend local events to introduce communities to the SCRCA, what we do, and how we can assist them in becoming more environmentally minded in their everyday lives.

Conservation Education

The SCRCA Conservation Education team was busy throughout 2024, engaging over 12,000 elementary and secondary students on environmental topics. The schoolyard “Nature in Your Neighbourhood” continued to be offered in addition to traditional field trips to overcome barriers associated with bussing costs and availability.

The team also expanded their connection, relationships, and collaborations with local First Nation schools. Our conservation educators continued to participate in the land-based education program at Hillside School at Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. The program provides students with hands-on, outdoor learning opportunities that contain a blend of western science, Ojibwee language, and traditional knowledge. In 2024, a similar program was initiated in partnership with the Aamjiwnaang Kinoomaage Gamig elementary school at Aamjiwnaang First Nation.



2024 Conservation Education by the Numbers

Field Trips to Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area
4,080 students
Nature in Your Neighbourhood
546 students
In School/Sponsored Programs
4,847 students
Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM)
451 students
Special Interest Groups/Local Events
2,449 students
Teachers/School Support Staff/Chaperones
1,813 adults
First Nation School Land-Based Ed Partnerships
1,440 students and 254 school staff

Communications

Social Media



2,802 Followers
182 Posts
241,284 Accounts Reached
16,910 Engagements



925 Followers
174 Posts
157 Reposts
450 Engagements
40,399 Impressions



1,137 Followers
98 Posts
13,484 Accounts Reached
3,558 Engagements
46,189 Views

Media Relations

19 media releases
870 news article mentions

Website

158,655 website views

Despite the soggy conditions, the 2024 Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race attracted almost 70 paddlers and raised just over \$2,000 for Conservation Education. Pictured is 2024 SCRCA Chair Pat Brown (left) and Board Member Emery Huszka (right) as they cross the finish line.

Special Events 2024

Green Infrastructure in Rural Drainage Demo Day
Strathroy

AgriSuite Workshop
Warwick

A.W. Campbell Maple Syrup Festival
A.W. Campbell Conservation Area
Alvinston

Water Quality, Erosion and Sediment Controls
Virtual

Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race
Dawn-Euphemia

Ipperwash Beach Cleanup
Lambton Shores

A Geocaching Adventure
Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area
Petrolia

St. Clair River Evening
Four Points By Sheraton
Point Edward

Forests Ontario Fall Tour
Middlesex Centre

Greening Your Grounds Workshop
Strathroy

McKeough Demonstration Day
St. Clair Township

Wawanosh Wetland Phragmites Removal Volunteer Day
Sarnia

Erosion Control Practices for Building Soil Resiliency Workshop
Warwick





Despite the wet and cold conditions, four dedicated volunteers participated in the 2025 Ipperwash Beach Cleanup event that saw 15 lbs of garbage removed from the shoreline.

Special Projects

Healthy Lake Huron

To improve water quality and promote clean beaches along the southeast shores of Lake Huron, the Healthy Lake Huron (HLH) program was launched in 2011. Since then, the SCRCa has partnered with all levels of government, local health units, other Conservation Authorities, and community groups to retain nutrients on land and reduce the risk of harmful algal blooms between Sarnia and Tobermory. In 2024, under the HLH program, staff spoke at the Port Franks Garden Club about Greening Your Grounds – climate adaptations individuals can implement in their own backyards. While the weather lessened participation, the Ipperwash Beach Cleanup was another successful event with four participants and 15 lbs of garbage collected. Staff enjoyed having a booth at the Forest Fall Fair where we showcased the unique species in our watershed. Finally, the Authority was asked to present at the Lake Huron Partnership Let's Talk Lake Huron webinar! Over the past year, Healthy Lake Huron funding through the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) supported the planting of 22,655 trees and the retirement of 11.49 hectares of land in the Lambton Shores/Lake Huron region of our watershed!

Sydenham River Aquatic Species at Risk Threat Inventory

Through funding from the Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk, the SCRCa is completing a Threat Inventory for aquatic Species at Risk in the Sydenham River. The East Sydenham River supports a wide diversity of plants and animals and is designated as one of 13 freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas in Canada by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Key Biodiversity Areas are areas contributing significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity. For this project, the SCRCa is synthesizing data on local threats to the aquatic environment that can be used to direct stewardship and recovery efforts.

In addition to the Forest Fall Fair (pictured), the SCRCa participated in the Wyoming and Alvinston Fall Fairs in 2024. Information on agricultural best management practices, species at risk, stewardship options for landowner properties, and other programs and services offered by the SCRCa was on hand and provided to attendees at all three events.



St. Clair River Area of Concern

The St. Clair River was designated as an Area of Concern (AOC) in 1987 due to extensive urban and industrial development. For over 30 years, the local community, Indigenous Peoples, and government have collaborated to enhance water quality and aquatic habitats, aiming to remove the river from the list of Great Lakes AOCs. Significant progress has been made in addressing the remaining actions outlined in the 2022-2027 work plan, with the goal of redesignating the four remaining Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) to “not impaired” once all actions have been completed.

The community engagement process for redesignating BUI 3 - Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations to “not impaired” commenced in 2024 and remains on-going. Presentations were made to the Aamjiwnaang First Nation Environment Committee, the Walpole Island First Nation community, and the Binational Public Advisory Council in 2024. Regarding BUI 14 – Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat, the status assessment report was presented to the Canadian Remedial Action Plan Implementation Committee in April and June 2024. The committee endorsed the report’s recommendation that BUI 14 be redesignated to “not impaired.” The report findings were also presented to the Aamjiwnaang First Nation Environment Committee in December 2024. Community engagement activities on the report findings and the recommendation will continue into 2025.

The Canadian Remedial Action Plan Implementation Committee hosted the second Annual Honouring the St. Clair River event on September 26, 2024, in Sarnia, to update the community on progress in restoring the St. Clair River. The event featured presentations on microplastics in the Great Lakes by the University of Toronto, public outreach activities by the Friends of the St. Clair River, and water quality monitoring by the Bluewater Association for Safety, Environment, and Sustainability (BASES). Approximately 70 individuals attended the event.

On September 4th, Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR) launched their 2024 photo contest, inviting amateur digital photographers to submit photos of the St. Clair River. The theme, “Celebrating Recovery on the St. Clair,” aimed to raise public awareness and appreciation for the river and encourage people to capture images showcasing ongoing improvements. By the time the contest closed on November 1st, a total of 143 photos had been submitted by 60 individuals. A panel of judges reviewed each of the entries and selected the winning photographs for each of the contest categories. Friends of St. Clair River presented each of the first-place winners with a \$500 cash prize, second-place winners with a \$300 cash prize, and third-place winners with a \$200 cash prize.



The implementation of the engineering and design plan for managing contaminated sediment in three priority areas of the St. Clair River began in November 2024. Dow Canada is leading the work which involves placing an erosion-resistant cover in targeted areas. Completing this work will help achieve the delisting criteria for two BUIs; Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption (BUI 1) and Degradation of Benthos (BUI 6).

WSP was retained to complete the sediment remediation at the three areas of contaminated sediment in the St. Clair River. Pictured is the mobilization of equipment required to complete the work.

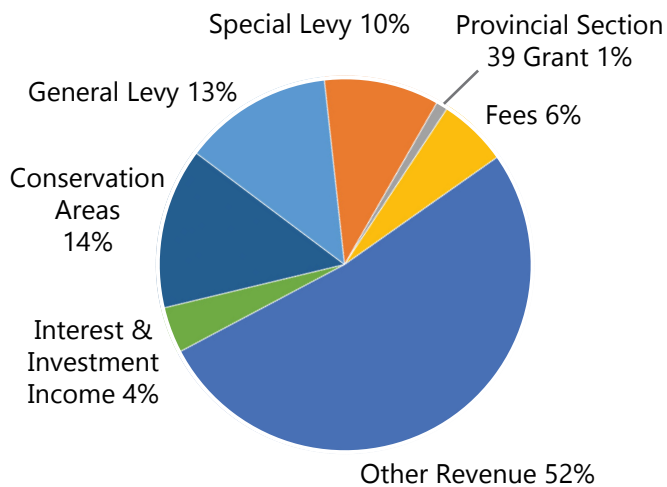


SCRCA staff participate in the Healthy Hike program as part of the annual team building and training day.

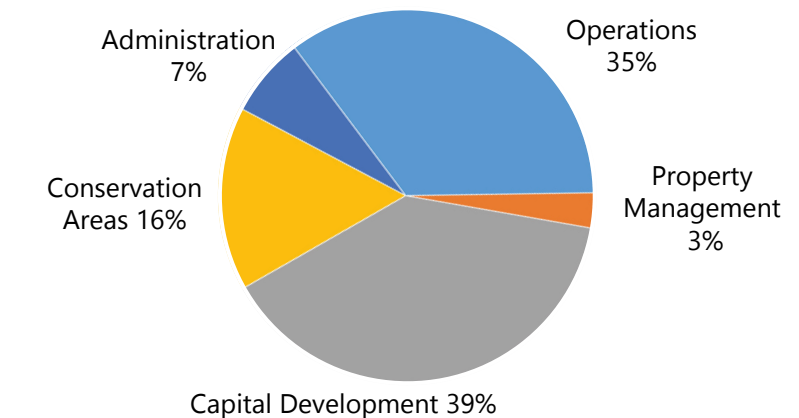
Administration

The administration and finance team at the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority plays an integral role in fostering a positive and safe workplace for all Authority employees and managing the Authority budget. Our team continuously updates and improves SCRCA policies to achieve business excellence and sustainability while maintaining a positive corporate atmosphere.

2024 Revenues – \$12,034,692*



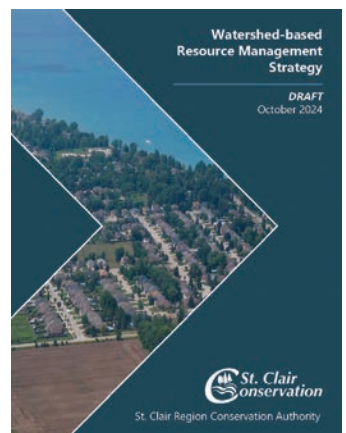
2024 Expenditures – \$11,369,425*



*unaudited

Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy

In addition to the Conservation Land Strategy, new regulations prescribed under the *Conservation Authorities Act* in early 2022 required the SCRCA to complete a draft Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy. The strategy was approved by the Board of Directors on December 12, 2024, after the completion of both public and Indigenous engagement. The strategy (available on the SCRCA website) sets out the guiding principles, objectives, and resources of the SCRCA, it's categories of programs and services, and the knowledge base for the work the Authority conducts on a day-to-day basis.



Our Staff

Administration Office

Donna Blue, Manager of Communications
Shelby Campbell, Planning Technician
Stephen Clark, Risk Management Official/Inspector
Emily De Cloet, Interim Coordinator, Flood Forecasting and Warning (Oct - Dec)
Melissa Deisley, Director of Planning and Regulations
Nicole Drumm, Watershed Biologist
Chris Durand, Manager of IT/GIS
Emily Febrey, Communication and Education Technician (Jan - Aug), Communication and Outreach Specialist (Aug - Dec)
Ashley Fletcher, Administrative Assistant/Board Coordinator
Nicholas Hagerty, Water Resources Technician (Jan - Nov)
Kate Jamieson, Payroll and Accounting Clerk
Chunning Li, Director of Corporate Services
Brigette Matthais, Water Quality Technician (Sep - Dec)
Lisa McNeill, Agricultural Stewardship Technician (Jul - Dec)
Mike Moroney, St. Clair River RAP Coordinator
Rashida Naznin, Environmental Engineer
Kelsey Oatman, Planning and Regulations Clerk
David Oczkowski, Forest Conservation Technician (Apr - Dec)
Craig Paterson, Manager of Biology
Tim Payne, Manager of Forestry
Ken Phillips, General Manager
Girish Sankar, Director of Water Resources (Jan - Oct)
Alison Seidler, GIS Specialist
Jeff Sharp, Conservation Services Specialist
Steve Shaw, Manager of Conservation Services
Kelli Smith, Conservation Lands Specialist
Sarah Snetsinger, Watershed Biologist
Ian Van Arkel, GIS Projects Technician (Aug - Dec)
Merrick Van Der Vaart, Drainage Officer (Jan - Apr), Regulations Officer (May - Dec)

Jessica Van Zwol, Healthy Watershed Specialist (Jan - Jul), Healthy Watershed Coordinator (Jul - Dec)
Jeff Vlasman, Regulations Coordinator
Meagan Weber, Regulations Officer
Greg Wilcox, Manager of Conservation Areas

Drinking Water Source Protection

John Campbell, Senior Information Management Analyst
Deb Kirk, Administrative Assistant

Field Offices

McKeough Floodway

Shane White, Maintenance Foreman, McKeough Floodway

A.W. Campbell Conservation Area

Don Skinner, Superintendent
Maryanne Nieuwenhuizen, Assistant Superintendent

Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area

Terry Barrie, Superintendent
Luke Derks, Assistant Superintendent
Melissa Levi, Conservation Education Coordinator
Mark Northcott, Education and Communication Technician (Sep - Dec)
Myra Spiller, Conservation Education/Community Partnership Technician

Warwick Conservation Area

Glenn Baxter, Superintendent
Derek Thompson, Assistant Superintendent

McLean Conservation Lands

Scott O'Brien, Superintendent



Staff Retirement

Steve Shaw, Manager of Conservation Services retired in December 2024 after over 36 years of service. Throughout his tenure, Steve has been an integral part of the success of the SCRCA's tree planting program, among others. We wish Steve the very best in his next chapter.



St. Clair Region Conservation Authority
 205 Mill Pond Crescent
 Strathroy, ON N7G 3P9
 t. 519-245-3710
 f. 519-245-3348
stclair@scrca.on.ca

