

Annual Report

2023



Our Future Together



**Credit Valley
Conservation**
inspired by nature

Recognizing the Enduring Presence of Indigenous Peoples

We acknowledge the rich history and enduring presence of Indigenous Peoples as stewards of the land and water of the Credit River Watershed.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the Credit River Watershed is part of the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. The Credit River Watershed is also part of the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee, and home to many First Nation, Metis and Inuit Peoples today.

Treaties made with Indigenous Peoples are enduring and include responsibility for both parties. We affirm that this land and water is our common source of life and we must all share responsibility for its care and stewardship for now and future generations.

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Michael Palleschi
Chair, Credit Valley
Conservation

From the Chair

The goal of our environmental work is to create a thriving environment that can be handed down from generation to generation. As we look ahead, we can take steps now to ensure future generations have the opportunity to experience nature locally and be immersed in nature-based educational and recreational activities.

The future Environmental Education Centre in Brampton will be ideal for residents to experience the outdoors and take care of their well-being. It will not only foster active living and connect people, but also contribute to climate change resilience efforts. The Environmental Education Centre will connect to the future Credit Valley Trail which will connect the Credit River Watershed from Lake Ontario in Port Credit to the headwaters in Orangeville.

As I reflect back on our work in 2023, I can see a strong network of people and partners that support CVC. This sets the foundation to continue growing and nurturing opportunities because together, with an inspired community, we can protect and restore the Credit River Watershed for the benefit of generations to come.



Quentin Hanchard
Chief Administrative
Officer, Credit Valley
Conservation

From the CAO

2023 was a pivotal year for Credit Valley Conservation. We developed the first of our next generation of corporate strategies that builds upon our strengths and our 70-year history as the primary authority on environmental science in the watershed.

Our *Strategic Plan 2023-2027, Our Future Together*, looks forward to what the Credit River Watershed will be like in 2051. It sets the direction to proactively prioritize our work for the realities of the future. It takes into account the interests and needs of our many stakeholders, ensuring that we deliver on our critical role to serve the people, our partners and nature in the Credit River Watershed.

In 2023, we initiated priority actions to put us on a path towards our desired future. This annual report is organized in six pillars which broadly represent our areas of work and highlight key accomplishments and features stories of our work to show how we are delivering on our new strategy.

About Credit Valley Conservation



Our Mission

Together, with an inspired community, we protect and restore the Credit River Watershed through science, education, policy and action.

Our Purpose

Established by the provincial government in cooperation with local municipalities in 1954, the Credit Valley Conservation Authority ("Credit Valley Conservation," or CVC) is one of 36 Conservation Authorities in Ontario.

In 2024, we will celebrate 70 years of conservation. We continue to be dedicated to protecting, restoring and managing the natural resources of the Credit River Watershed. We work in partnership with municipal governments, landowners, community organizations and other stakeholders to deliver locally-based programs and services.



Leading Environmental Science

As watershed communities become more vulnerable to natural hazards, climate change and other stressors, local environmental science is increasingly needed to inform decision-making.

In 2023, we continued to generate science rooted in local data to guide our work and support municipal partners and stakeholders as they plan initiatives to improve land and water health, and protect public health and safety.

This aligns with our guiding principle of watershed-scaled. We focus on work that provides the greatest cumulative impact at the watershed scale.



Key Accomplishments

- Released a milestone report, *Integrated Watershed Monitoring Program Summary of Conditions and Trends in the Credit River Watershed*, and presented to watershed municipalities.
- Completed a five-year performance monitoring project for Region of Peel on the Mississauga Road low impact development feature. We analyzed stormwater quality and quantity, and how the feature was operating to inform ongoing management and ensure compliance with provincial requirements.
- Developed an innovative cost-benefit tool in partnership with academia to support municipalities make informed decisions on adaptation measures to reduce flood and erosion damages and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from stormwater infrastructure.
- Partnered with private landowners to conduct natural heritage inventories in the northern watershed.
- Completed an erosion risk assessment identifying infrastructure at risk of failure to support municipal asset planning and emergency preparedness planning.



Featured Projects

Characterizing the Credit River Watershed

We continued work on the Watershed Plan, a guiding document that will use the latest science and data, as well as stakeholder and community input, to establish long-term priorities for CVC and municipal partners. In 2023, we made significant progress on *Phase 1 Characterization Report*. We characterized the health of the Credit River Watershed and described how it has evolved from the 1950s to today. We collected input from the public through a survey and hosted two open houses to share findings from the draft report.

Connecting Knowledge with Action

In 2023, we hosted the third biennial Research Colloquium. The event brought together over 100 researchers, environmental professionals and CVC staff to share and learn about environmental research that is being carried out in the Credit River Watershed. The colloquium achieves three key goals: helping CVC to incorporate findings into our work, building and strengthening collaborations between researchers, and providing an opportunity for environmental practitioners to give direct feedback to researchers.

Resilient and Effective Watershed-based Planning

Rapid urban growth and climate-induced changes are impacting flood and erosion risks in the watershed.

In 2023, we strengthened local environmental planning and conservation efforts by collaborating with our neighbouring conservation authorities and local municipalities to support development and sustainable growth.

This aligns with our guiding principle to be rooted in science. We make decisions based on scientific evidence and our experience and knowledge of the watershed.



Key Accomplishments

- Achieved 97 per cent compliance on meeting our service delivery targets for development permit issuance.
- Reviewed 290 planning applications to ensure the protection of life and property from natural hazards such as flooding, erosion, dynamic beaches or unstable soil or bedrock.
- Conducted road flood vulnerability assessments for the Peel Region road network to inform disaster preparation.
- Maintained and enhanced flood forecasting models and real-time network of 59 gauges.
- Consistently achieved a ‘good’ to ‘excellent’ rating on our client service survey results, indicating that we are maintaining our commitment to knowledge sharing, professionalism and timely responses.



Featured Projects

Providing Exceptional Customer Service

We consistently strive to meet our client service delivery goals through efficient permitting and plan review, providing customer-focused, responsive and knowledgeable service to our watershed stakeholders. We continued to develop innovative planning solutions through the creation of support tools such as *Guidelines for Designing Enhancement Plans within Setbacks and Buffers*. By providing these tools, we can better support our stakeholders when navigating development and permit applications.

Responding to Change

In 2023, we responded to provincial legislative changes, notably Bill 23. The Bill directed us to maintain our focus on our core mandate and we continued providing technical reviews related to natural hazards to ensure the development of safe communities. In doing so, we also supported our municipal partners in reaching their natural heritage and water resource objectives through knowledge sharing and technical support from our watershed planning implementation tool programming.

Enduring Ecosystems

We know the long-term health of the watershed is intertwined with our health and well-being.

In 2023, we continued to foster an ethic of environmental conservation and action. Guided by science, we worked to build watershed resilience by strengthening natural systems through restoration and stewardship on our properties, and on public and private lands.

This aligns with our guiding principle of biased towards action. We're focusing efforts on activities that lead to impactful, on-the-ground results.



Key Accomplishments

- Planted over 30,000 seedlings and 16,000 potted plants across the watershed and managed 47 hectares of plantation forest on CVC and private lands.
- Enrolled 113 acres in the Bird-friendly Certified Hay program where farmers agreed to delay hay cutting to protect ground-nesting birds such as eastern meadowlark and bobolink.
- Installed the first mini-forest at St George's Anglican Church with \$15,000 in funding from Green Communities Canada. This technique leads to accelerated growth and forest establishment.
- Worked with over 500 landowners to plant trees, restore ecosystems and protect drinking water sources.
- Expanded monitoring for the invasive hemlock woolly adelgid to 85 forests sites. The aphids feed on eastern hemlock trees. None were found in the watershed.



Featured Projects

Increasing Tree Cover in Communities

In partnership with the City of Mississauga and funding from the federal government 2 Billion Trees project, we planted 565 trees on over 400 home properties in communities with low tree canopy cover. Our Home Planting Team helps urban homeowners select the right native tree or shrub for their yard, and delivers and plants it. By increasing the urban tree canopy, we are helping to cool our cities and improve biodiversity.

Improving our Growing Techniques

In 2023, we started growing native wildflowers, grasses and wetland plants at our nursery located at Warwick Conservation Area. Previously our focus was solely on growing native trees and shrubs. This expansion will better enable us to supply our stewardship and restoration projects by having a variety of plants available. We trialed different growing techniques by testing soil composition and pot size to learn which combinations support root development and plant health.

Nature-rich Parks and Greenspaces

Watershed residents and visitors are increasingly looking to CVC parks to enjoy time in nature.

In 2023, we sought more opportunities to support health and well-being of communities while protecting natural heritage and the health of our parks by acquiring land, improving infrastructure and offering engaging parks programming.

This aligns with our guiding principle of people and nature in balance. We're enhancing the quality of life for all living beings in the watershed by expanding our network of greenspaces and access to nature.



Key Accomplishments

- Engaged 19,000 students and park visitors in educational programming and saw almost one million visitors at our parks.
- Completed landform construction and initiated construction on trails, boardwalks, lookouts and gathering spaces at the future Jim Tovey Lakeview Conservation Area. These amenities will provide scenic connections to the lake, wetlands, grasslands and forest environments showcasing the diverse cultural and ecological history of the site.
- Updated wayfinding standards to improve visitor safety and navigation in our parks, installed new wayfinding signage at Silver Creek Conservation Area, and a washroom and staff building at Ken Whillans Conservation Area.
- Launched Tales on the Trail at Island Lake and Terra Cotta Conservation Areas. This collaborative project with Orangeville Public Library and Halton Hills Public Library promotes literacy and recreation in nature.



Featured Projects

Connecting the Credit Valley Trail

Over the past several years, we have worked with our municipal partners to plan, build and connect the Credit Valley Trail. In 2023, we hosted the Credit Valley Trail Spring Symposium Chapter meeting and a Chapter hike in the fall. We are building the first Indigenous placemaking site along the Credit Valley Trail: the Crane Gathering Space at Island Lake Conservation as part of our commitment to the implementation of *The Indigenous Experience Plan*. We expanded the number of kilometres of the trail by connecting the Upper Canada College Trail in partnership with the Town of Halton Hills.

Planning Future Greenspaces

We completed the Pits to Parks feasibility study for the Pinchin Pit and Flaherty West Pit properties in Caledon. Building on the success of the Jim Tovey Lakeview Conservation Area project, we are partnering with the Region of Peel to find a beneficial reuse of excess soil from infrastructure projects to undertake enhanced ecological restoration. This project will set a new standard for pit restoration and will demonstrate how reclamation of former aggregate sites can grow the amount of public greenspace in the watershed.

Active and Involved Communities

Watershed residents and partners are seeking opportunities to take meaningful climate action where they live, work and play.

In 2023, we continued growing our strong network of people and groups that support our mission through partnerships, education programs, engagement initiatives and collaborations.

This aligns with our guiding principle to seek co-benefits. We're prioritizing initiatives that have multiple benefits for CVC, our partners and the watershed as we work towards creating the future described in our vision for the watershed.



Key Accomplishments

- Hosted 500 events for watershed residents including community tree plantings, invasive species removals, litter clean ups, educational workshops and neighbourhood tours.
- Engaged over 800 employees from 25 companies in the Corporate Conservation program, where they volunteered at 34 events and contributed more than \$126,000 in program funding.
- Introduced new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Leadership award category to the Friends of the Credit Conservation Awards.
- Wrapped up the Butterfly Blitz, a citizen science program, that created a watershed-wide inventory of butterflies and increased our understanding of species diversity and habitats with over 10,000 butterfly observations.
- Installed our tenth school rain garden at St. Joseph Elementary in Brampton with the help of over 180 St. Joseph students and volunteers from Canon Canada to plant over 1,000 trees, shrubs and perennials.



Featured Projects

Launching the Cooksville Creek SNAP

In collaboration with City of Mississauga, Region of Peel, and community partners and residents, we initiated development of our third Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan (SNAP) in the Cooksville neighbourhood of south-central Mississauga. Approximately 450 individuals participated in community engagement and early action events, sharing ideas and jump-starting local climate action. The action plan will focus on making Cooksville Creek and the densely populated, culturally diverse neighbourhood through which it flows, healthier and more resilient to climate change.

Engaging Youth in Stewardship Action

In 2023, almost 140 student volunteers participated in the Conservation Youth Corps program contributing over 4,865 hours. They tackled environmental stewardship projects at different sites in their community, our conservation areas and across the watershed. They contributed to fish monitoring, tending to newly planted trees and shrubs, removing invasive plants and helping with stream restoration projects.

Future-ready CVC

We know change is coming to the Credit River Watershed. Communities will continue to grow, the impacts of climate change will be felt more frequently and technology will continue to advance.

In 2023, we continued to strengthen our organizational readiness by investing in our people and technology, and fostering strategic agility in the way we operate.

This aligns with our guiding principle of living our values. We embed environmental and social responsibility in our work.



Key Accomplishments

- Completed *Strategic Plan 2023-2027, Our Future Together*, to guide our work over the next five years while keeping a long-term view to 2051 top of mind.
- Continued to foster our workplace culture facilitated through sector-leading policies and programs focused on employee growth, well-being and belonging. This is reflected in being awarded Greater Toronto's Top Employer for a third year in a row.
- Developed a *Capital Asset Management Plan* for all asset classes.
- Modernized almost 70 years of records and documents through digitization.
- Advanced accessibility on our properties and in our communications.



Featured Projects

Strengthening Partnerships through the *Conservation Authorities Act* Transition Period

We achieved all of our *Conservation Authorities Act* transition period timelines and executed memorandums of understanding with all of our participating municipalities to ensure continuity in delivery of our programs and services.

Building Resilience in our Operations

We built Canada's first Canadian Standards Association compliant smart blue roof at our Administrative Office in Mississauga. It will safely store 40,000 litres of rainwater for reuse. Smart blue roofs are a new stormwater management solution that reduce the peak flow rate of runoff during rain events helping to reduce downstream erosion and flooding.

2023 Financial Highlights

Total contributions from municipal levies



Total generated by parks, planning fees, etc.



Total raised through grants and other sources



View the 2023 Credit Valley Conservation Foundation Gratitude Report for more information about how the Foundation raises funds to support our work at cvcfoundation.ca.

Total funding



For more details see our Audited Financial Statements at cvc.ca.

Thank you to our member municipalities for your support and valued partnerships!

Our Leaders

Board of Directors

- Tom Adams**
Regional Councillor Ward 6, Town of Oakville
- Dipika Damerla**
Regional Councillor Ward 7, City of Mississauga
- Stephen Dasko**
Regional Councillor Ward 1, City of Mississauga
- Michael Dehn**
Mayor, Town of Erin
- Christina Early**
Regional Councillor Wards 1, 2, 3, Town of Caledon
- Dennis Keenan**
Regional Councillor, Wards 3 and 4, City of Brampton
- Ann Lawlor**
CVC Vice-Chair, Mayor, Town of Halton Hills
- Matt Mahoney**
Councillor Ward 8, City of Mississauga
- Fred Nix**
Deputy Mayor, Town of Mono
- Michael Palleschi**
CVC Chair, Regional Councillor Wards 2 and 6, City of Brampton
- Rick Stevens**
Councillor, Town of Orangeville
- Alvin Tedjo**
Regional Councillor Ward 2, City of Mississauga

Senior Leadership Team

- Josh Campbell**
Director, Planning and Development Services
- Quentin Hanchard**
Chief Administrative Officer
- Andrew Kett**
Director, Corporate Services
- Terri LeRoux**
Director, Parks, Lands and Community Engagement
- Aviva Patel**
Director, Watershed Knowledge
- John Sinnige**
Director, Watershed Management



Connect with Us

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