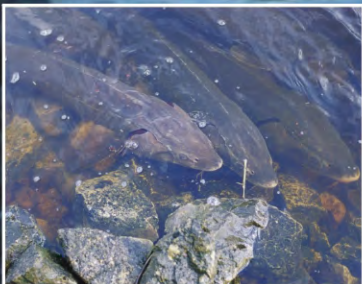


2008 Annual Report



ne Planet
ne Chance



Essex Region
Conservation
Authority

2008 Highlights

- 35 years in conservation.
- Completion of the Terms of Reference by the Source Water Protection Committee.
- Clean Water-Green Spaces naturalization of over 170 acres.
- Over 185,000 trees planted and largest community based seed collection program in Canada.
- 6 Friends of Watersheds groups held a total of 45 planting, cleanup and educational events.
- Fighting Island Lake Sturgeon habitat restoration project completed with international funding.
- Considerable input into land use planning and development applications to ensure protection from flooding and erosion.
- Completion of many shoreline and watercourse improvements such as the East Riverside Little River Dykes flood control project protecting over 2,000 homes.
- Ongoing development of a Sustainable Strategy for Southeast Leamington.
- More than 30 community events at Conservation Areas and elsewhere.
- Over 10,000 students experienced environmental and heritage education and a new renewable energy interpretive program initiated.
- 35 campsites upgraded at Holiday Beach Conservation Area.
- Restoration of John R. Park Homestead in its 30th year as a museum.
- Grand opening of Petite Cote Conservation Area in LaSalle.
- Acquisition of 13 acres of Detroit River wetlands in partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada.
- Significant Clean Water-Green Space contributions to the protection of Spring Garden Complex ANSI, City of Windsor.

*"How long can we go on and safely pretend that the **environment...**
is not the economy,
is not health,
is not the prerequisite to development,
is not recreation?*

Is it realistic to see ourselves as managers of an entity out there called the environment...

*extraneous to us,
an alternative to the economy,
too expensive a value to protect
in difficult economic times?*

When we organize ourselves starting from this premise, we do so with dangerous consequences to our economy, health, and industrial growth.

*We are now just beginning to realize that we must find an alternative to our ingrained behaviour, of burdening future generations, resulting from our misplaced belief that there is a choice between economy and the environment. **That choice**, in the long term, turns out to be an illusion with awesome consequences for humanity. "*

*Charles Caccia, Member of Parliament,
House of Commons (Canada)
WCED Public Hearing, Ottawa 26-27 May, 1986*

Cover photos:

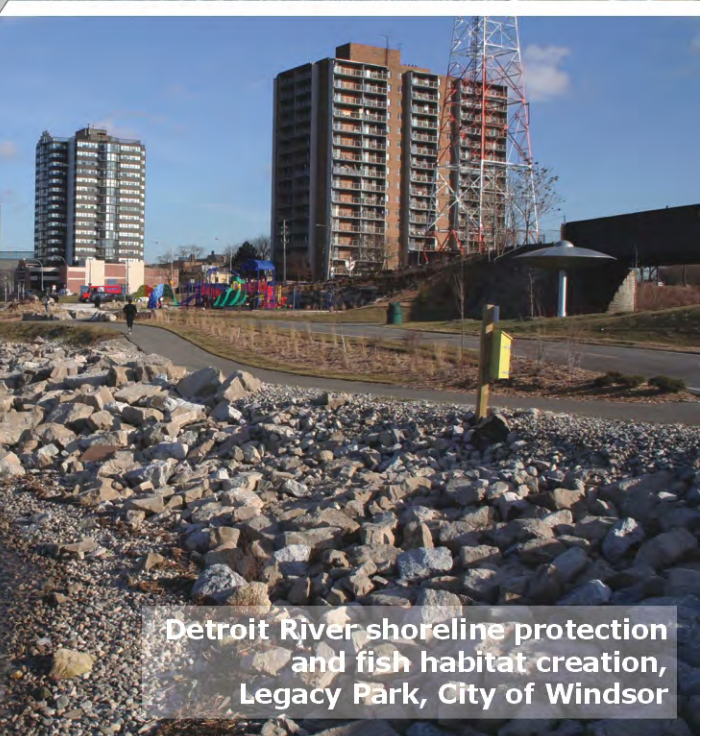
Large image - Crystal Bay Conservation Area, Detroit River
Top small image - Sunoco Earth Day tree planting at Malden Park

Middle small images - Petite Cote Conservation Area

Lower small image - Lake Sturgeon fish

"We came all this way to explore the Moon, & the most important thing is that we discovered the Earth."

Astronaut Bill Anders, Apollo 8



Detroit River shoreline protection and fish habitat creation, Legacy Park, City of Windsor

Contents



The 2008 financial review will be published separately in 2009.

www.erca.org

Message from the Chair

2008 Board of Directors

Town of Amherstburg

Rick Fryer
Anthony Leardi - Vice Chair

Town of Essex

Morley Bowman
Ron Rogers

Town of Kingsville

Christopher Lewis
Tamara Stomp

Town of Lakeshore

Tom Bain
Al Fazio

Town of LaSalle

Sue Desjarlais
Ray Renaud

Municipality of Leamington

Rick Atkin
Bill Derbyshire

Township of Pelee

Darlene Wiper

Town of Tecumseh

Joe Bachetti
Tom Burton

City of Windsor

David Brister - Chair
Jo Anne Gignac
Percy Hatfield
Fulvio Valentinis

General Manager / Secretary-Treasurer

Ken Schmidt

I reflect on the past year as Chair of the Board of Directors in the context of the 35 years of growth and achievement that the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) has experienced. This area is special in many ways as the most southerly part of Canada, it is blessed with about 102 miles of shoreline, rivers, Carolinian forests, wetlands, unusual alvars and the best tall grass prairie remaining in Canada. Essex region has an excellent network of trails and recreational opportunities, is uniquely positioned on the spring and fall bird migration route, there is an abundance of prime agricultural land and we enjoy the benefits of a close relationship with our neighbours just across the Detroit River. Whereever we live in Windsor-Essex, we have convenient access to conservation areas, environmental interpretive programs and opportunities to take positive environmental action through volunteer groups and community events.

2008 saw ERCA continuing to work diligently towards its goal of a healthy and sustainable future for the region, in the context of an increasingly grim international economic outlook. In fact, the economic downturn has highlighted that an investment in the sustainable natural resources of a region is essential if it is to flourish and offer a high quality of life attracting employers, employees, tourists and residents. Clean air, clean water and green spaces provide the basis of a prospering and healthy community and are vital to its long term success. Environmental health, economic health and human health are intrinsically linked and although we have more challenges here than in many areas of Ontario, we also have many opportunities.

With the ongoing support and assistance of our municipalities, the Federal and Provincial Governments, volunteers, staff, the Board of Directors, and the larger community, ERCA has continued to enhance its services and programs, to expand its conservation areas, to progress drinking water source protection, to deliver flood and erosion strategies, and to restore and protect natural areas in line with their Strategic Plan, *Accelerating the Pace Towards a Sustainable Community*. Collaboration with our many partners is key to the success of the watershed programs and projects required to protect and improve the environmental health of the Windsor-Essex region. Working together with others has facilitated past success and will continue to be central in achieving environmental improvements that will deliver immediate community benefit and leave a legacy for future generations.



David Brister, Chair



One Planet, One Chance

Conservation Authorities play an essential part in building a more resilient local environment that can better endure the impacts of global challenges such as climate change, shrinking water supplies, and rapid development. Essex Region Conservation Authority addresses these and other environmental challenges, shared globally, through sustainable watershed management with locally based initiatives, in collaboration with partners and based on the five priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan *Accelerating the Pace Towards a Sustainable Community*:

- Protect and improve water
- Protect natural areas and enhance biodiversity
- Protect homes and people from flood and erosion
- Expand conservation education
- Provide nature-based recreational opportunities

Sustainable watershed management involves improving and protecting the natural resources of a watershed by integrating ecological, economic, and social perspectives. That means the Management of natural resources with water quality as a primary focus, achieving the greatest results in the most cost-efficient manner while encouraging the participation of all community stakeholders and collaborating with partners.

Through thirty-five years of conservation ERCA has developed the experience and expertise to best address the challenges and opportunities ahead and to guide Windsor-Essex County in an environmentally responsible direction that will ensure we experience a high quality of life and leave a natural legacy for our children and grandchildren. Each year, ERCA is working with the community to increase natural areas coverage, improve water quality across the region and explore opportunities for environmental improvement.

"Without the forest cover, we would have to invest billions in flood protection infrastructure and water treatment facilities. So preserving forests in southern Ontario is not just the right thing to do from an environmental perspective, it's prudent economic policy as well."
Prime Minister Stephen Harper,
March 14 2007 press conference

One Planet, One Chance is an exhibit displayed at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2008 while governments gathered at the 63rd United Nations General Assembly to discuss the future of the Kyoto Protocol. It serves to remind that climate change could bring unprecedented reversals in poverty reduction, nutrition, health and education. It is based on the Human Development Report 2007/2008 which underlines that all nations and all people share the same atmosphere and demonstrates that the world is drifting towards a "tipping point" that could lock the poorest countries and their poorest citizens in a downward spiral, leaving hundreds of millions facing malnutrition, water scarcity, ecological threats, and a loss of livelihoods.

For further details of the Human Development Report 2007/2008 see:
<http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-2008>.

Message from the General Manager

When this Conservation Authority was established in 1973, we had much work to do. The quality of our water was poor, over 10,000 homes were in danger of flood and erosion, and green space was quickly diminishing.

Now, 35 years later, our region is a testament to what can be achieved collaboratively. We have improved water quality conditions and are working towards a Source Water Protection Plan, we are the only area in the province to increase our green spaces by as much as 2%, and over 5,000 homes have been protected from flood and erosion. Restoring our region's natural resources not only improves our local environment, but also helps to create a sustainable future, an enhanced community image, and a more vibrant economy.

We believe this can happen, because of the spirit and strength of our people, partners, and supporters. In these challenging times, our determination is more important than ever. We must leverage our achievements to build a sustainable environment that will set this region ahead of others in this great Province.

There has never been a more exciting time to be involved in watershed protection, because of the positive impact that it can have for the community as a whole. Healthy watersheds ensure that we continue to enjoy Great Lakes and all the waterways that connect us around the Windsor-Essex region. Investment in environmental protection and enhancement serves to safeguard the greatest asset that this region has and will be returned many times with resulting economic development. Balancing human and environmental needs has been ERCA's priority for the past 35 years and is now more important than ever in the current economic climate.

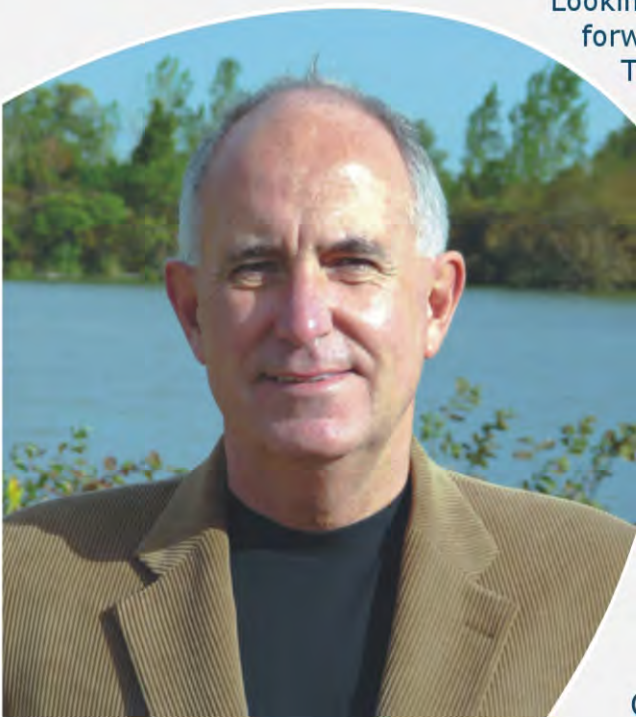
The achievements of 2008 are the results of ongoing partnerships that have grown from strength to strength and will continue to provide opportunity to make a real difference for the future. Steps we take together today as the Conservation Authority, in cooperation with our member municipalities, government agencies, and our community residents, will benefit our watersheds for years to come. We are pleased to recognize another successful year. Thank you to our members, municipal politicians, our Federal and Provincial Government, and non-government partners for continuing to work with us in 2008 and beyond.

Looking back, we have much to be proud of; looking forward, we have great optimism for our work ahead.

The changes we seek cannot happen without the help of our great partners and this special community. We ask you to be a part of the movement to restore this region, building on each individual effort that so many of you have already made. It only takes the contribution of a few to make the difference for many. Your individual action of planting trees, reducing water pollution, and supporting the Essex region Conservation Authority's (ERCA) initiatives is what has changed this environment. It is with your support that we reach our successes. What we have achieved in the past gives us hope for what we, as a community, can achieve tomorrow.

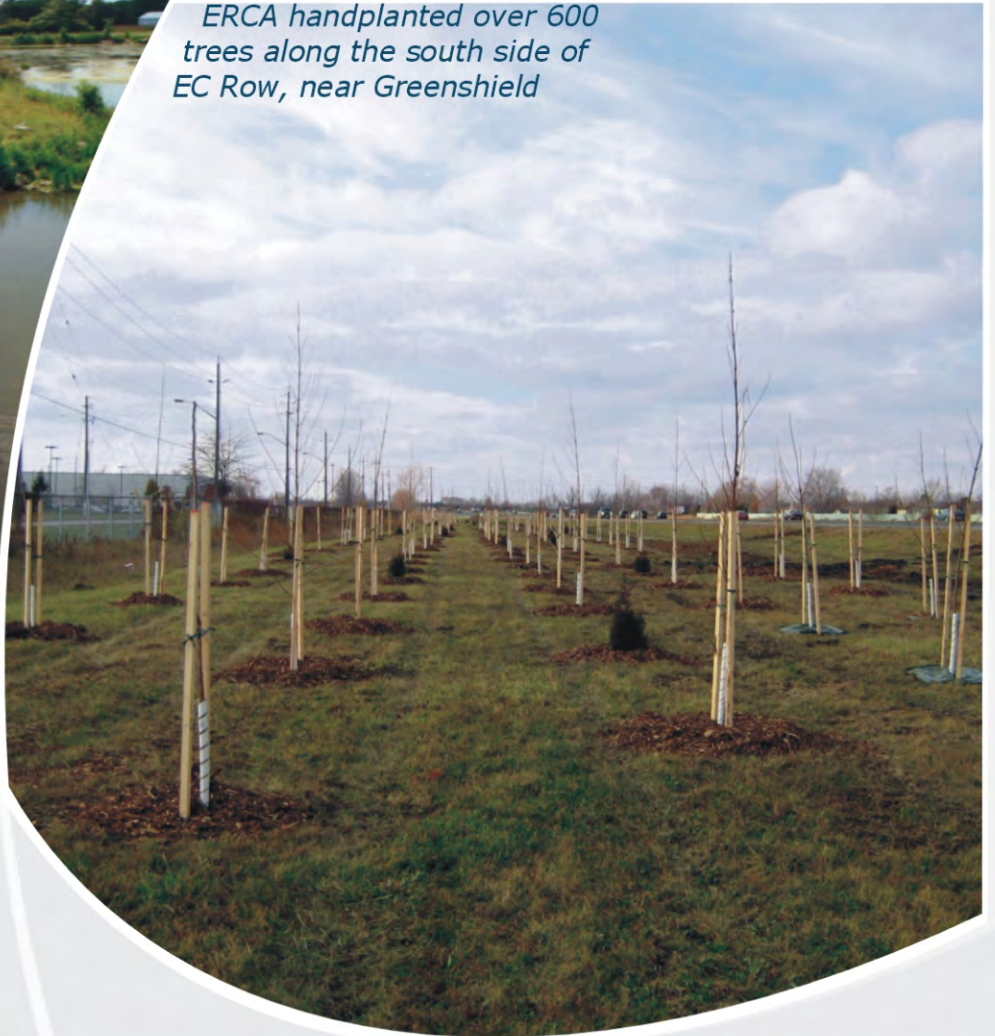


Ken Schmidt,
General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer



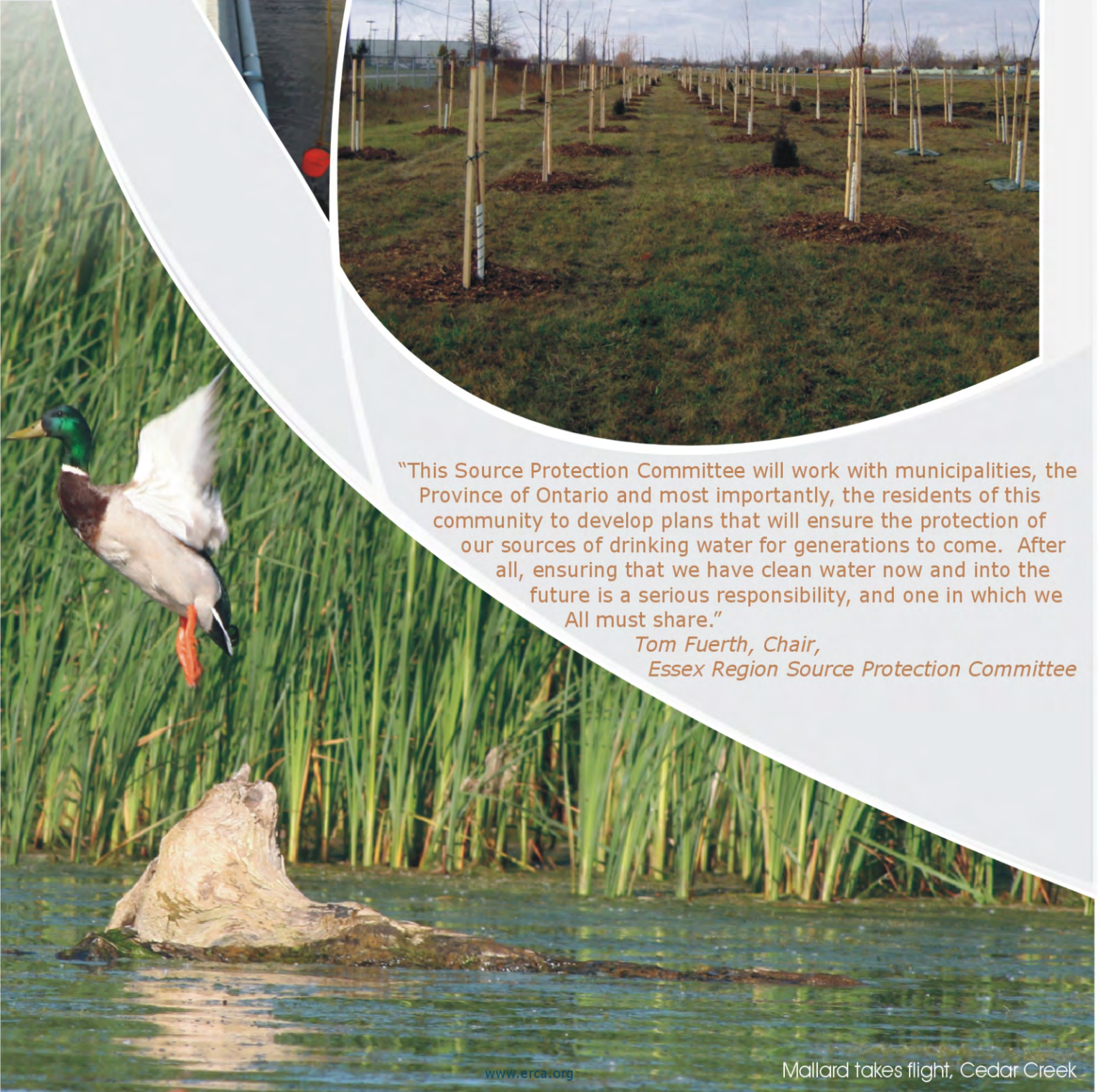
Greening along EC Row, City of Windsor:
ERCA handplanted over 600
trees along the south side of
EC Row, near Greenshield

Water
quality
testing.



"This Source Protection Committee will work with municipalities, the Province of Ontario and most importantly, the residents of this community to develop plans that will ensure the protection of our sources of drinking water for generations to come. After all, ensuring that we have clean water now and into the future is a serious responsibility, and one in which we All must share."

*Tom Fuerth, Chair,
Essex Region Source Protection Committee*



Protect & Improve Water Quality

Water is our most precious natural resource. Life in the Essex Region is very much defined by our relationship with water. It is of critical importance for transportation, recreation, manufacturing, food production, home and personal care, and safe reliable drinking water. Clean, safe drinking water is the single most important factor in maintaining a high quality of life, good health, and strong prosperity. ERCA worked towards safeguarding our water in this area by:

Source Water Protection Planning

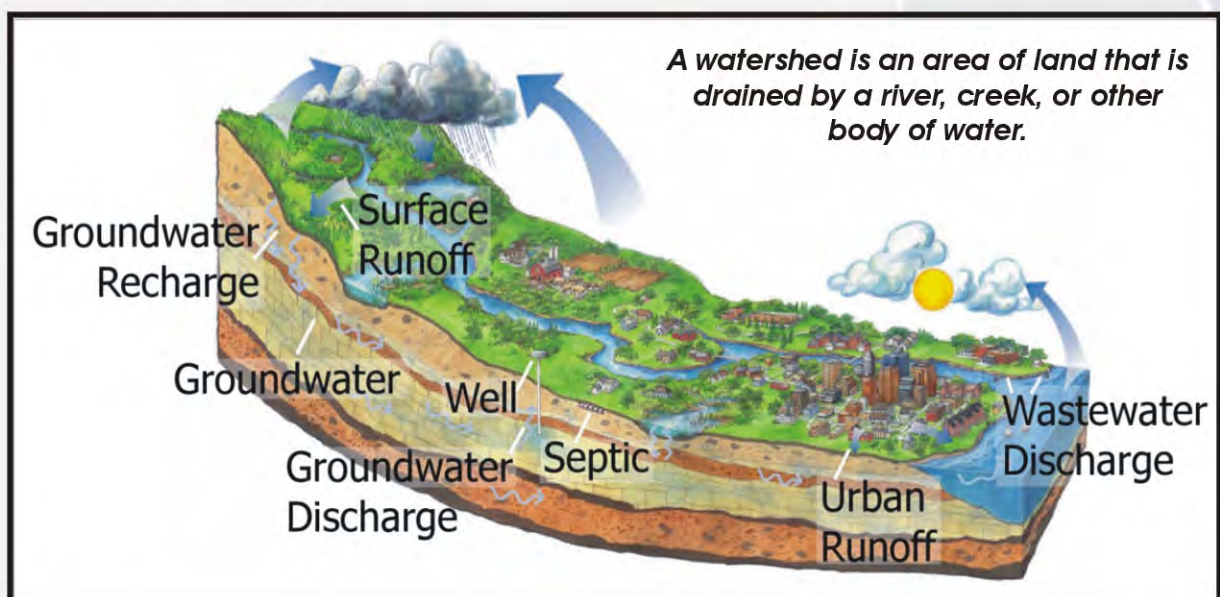
The Source Protection Committee, in its first year of operation, completed a Terms of Reference to guide the preparation of the Assessment Report and Source Protection Plan through 2012. Various technical studies continued to help identify potential vulnerable areas, threats, and issues that may affect the sources of drinking water. Public outreach and education continued with Open Houses held in the 'Intake Protection Zones' for each of the municipal residential drinking water systems in the region, displays were placed in various municipal offices and public locations, and committee members and staff participated in several community events. Provincial funding through the 'Early Actions' program was used for the removal of an old fuel tank near the Amherstburg Water Plant.

Clean Water~Green Spaces' Water Quality Program provided technical and financial assistance to 64 landowners for projects that improve water quality and reduce soil erosion. Completed projects included 32 buffer strips and tree plantings, 15 soil erosion control structures, 13 septic system upgrades, and 4 well capping projects.



Surface Water Quality Monitoring continued at 36 ERCA stations and the 8 Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network stations across the region. Wet weather monitoring and nearshore monitoring was initiated in 4 pilot watersheds to help with our understanding of impacts on the nearshore of the Great Lakes system. **Ground Water Quality Monitoring** continued at 8 monitoring stations operated by ERCA, as part of the Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network.

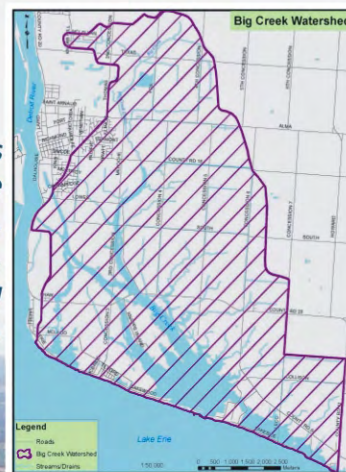
Geographic Information Systems Precision Farming partnership continued to assist with environmentally sound, cost-effective farming practices, on a fee-for-service basis.





Fighting Island Lake Sturgeon Habitat Restoration Project Announcement, Oct 10, 2008, Bruce Crozier, M.P.P. Essex, Sue Desjarlais, Town of LaSalle.

Big Creek Watershed Plan was initiated in partnership with the Provincial and Federal Governments, Creekside Hunting and Fishing, the Town of Amherstburg and others.



"Transforming Malden Park through repeated Sunoco Earth Day tree plantings is a great example of what individuals and groups in the community can achieve through varied efforts to protect and enhance natural areas in this region."

David Brister, ERCA Board of Directors' Chair

"The best part of the whole experience for us was watching the wide variety of trees growing larger, looking more like a woodlot every year. It's a great feeling knowing that we are improving the environment."

Mark Bovenkamp, who planted 32 acres of trees on his farm near the Town of Essex, with the assistance of ERCA.



Tree Planting at the WFCU Arena
David Brister, ERCA Board of Directors' Chair, Matthew Child, Director of Watershed Restoration, ERCA, Caroline Biribauer, Friends of Watersheds Organizer, ERCA



Protect Natural Areas & Enhance Biodiversity

Partnership stewardship projects continue to grow in importance as communities recognize that repairing environmental damage is achievable. ERCA works with landowners across the region to design, implement, and provide funding assistance for restoration projects. Projects include forest restoration, wetland construction, prairie plantings, rock chutes, buffer strips, and septic upgrades. By working together, a natural legacy of sustainability can be realized for future generations. Here's what we did this year in working towards a sustainable future:

Clean Water~Green Spaces' Habitat Restoration Program resulted in the naturalization of over 170 acres at over 40 project sites. These included forest and prairie habitats utilizing a diversity of native Carolinian trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants. **Clean Water~Green Spaces** also allowed ERCA, in partnership with member municipalities, to continue to protect significant natural areas including the Spring Garden Complex in Windsor and a forested section along the Ruscom River in Lakeshore.

Tree Planting activities at over 40 privately owned sites were completed through our spring and fall tree planting program. Over 185,000 seedling and large stock trees were distributed and planted throughout the region to increase local forest cover.

Together with our partners in the **Emerald Ash Borer Response - Natural Areas Restoration Program**, 6 community-based seed collection projects were undertaken with the assistance of over 115 volunteers. Almost 2,000 pounds of native tree and shrub seeds were collected locally, which will propagate into seedlings by our commercial growers to enhance the survival and vigour of seedlings used in our program in the coming years. The program is now one of the largest community-based seed collection programs in Canada.

Plan Review continued to involve substantial input into 7 comprehensive Official Plan reviews and 3 comprehensive Zoning Bylaws. ERCA assisted the County of Essex with the development of its Alternative Energy Policies as part of an Official Plan Update process. In addition, over 650 *Planning Act* applications, environmental impact assessments, and related applications were referred to ERCA by member municipalities for input. ERCA's comments ensure natural areas protection and restoration, as well as water quality enhancement opportunities, are included in planning approvals.

Friends of Watersheds continued with 6 established groups around the region. 45 events were held, including 28 tree plantings, 2 wildflower plantings, 3 watercourse cleanups, and 12 educational events. Approximately 2,075 seedling trees and over 1,300 large stock trees were planted on approximately 7 acres. Over 2,000 people were involved in Friends of Watersheds activities in 2008.

The **Fighting Island Lake Sturgeon Habitat Restoration Project** was completed through a partnership involving numerous Canadian and U.S. organizations from the public and private sectors and is the first-ever fish habitat restoration project in the Great Lakes undertaken with Canadian and U.S. funding. Almost one acre of spawning habitat was placed on the bed of the Detroit River, which will provide spawning habitat for Lake Sturgeon and other desirable fish species.

The **Essex-Erie Aquatic Species at Risk Recovery Strategy** was implemented focusing on restoring or enhancing habitat for rare fish in priority areas. This work was undertaken in partnership with several jurisdictions in the Lake Erie watershed where these rare fish are known to occur.

A **Big Creek Watershed Plan** was initiated in partnership with the Federal and Provincial Governments, the Town of Amherstburg and others. Technical studies were started and public engagement was undertaken as an initial step to completing the plan by 2010. The results of the plan will guide land use and resource management decision making, over time.



Protect People & Property from Natural Hazards

The havoc caused by Hurricane Hazel in 1954 inspired regional control of flood and erosion management and created new impetus for Conservation Authorities to protect communities from natural hazards on a watershed basis.

The Windsor-Essex County and Pelee Island community is fortunate to have extensive shoreline providing convenient access to recreation and exceptional surroundings, but with this must come responsible watershed management. ERCA's Flood and Erosion Control program protects people and property from the dangers of flooding and erosion while also protecting the natural environment. Each new development or construction project is individually assessed to ensure its inhabitants will not be subjected to the hazards associated with living near the water. In 2008 ERCA undertook the following initiatives:

Regulations and Development Reviews continued to provide considerable input into land use planning and development applications, including one window permitting services for proposed work along shorelines, waterways, and floodplains. This ensures protection against flooding and erosion, prevents adverse impacts such as increased downstream flows, interference with natural coastal processes, and assists with the protection of natural areas and habitat.

ERCA continues to provide its comprehensive **Flood/Erosion Control Program** including Flood Forecasting, issuing flood watches and warnings, and updating of Flood Contingency plans for each municipality. In 2008, five Flood Advisories and one Flood Warning were issued.

The final phase of the **East Riverside Little River Dykes** flood control works was completed, providing enhanced flood protection for over 2,000 homes and the sewage treatment plant in east Windsor.

The **First Concession Dyke** engineering study was completed and outlined several recommendations for the repair of the dyke. ERCA will work together with the Municipality of Leamington, in the event that they decide to proceed with the recommended works.

The **Sustainable Management Strategy for Southeast Leamington** continues to evolve over time. Consultations with local residents and multiple levels of government continue as the process moves forward.

Studies along the **Colchester to Southeast Shoal Lake Erie Shoreline** continue in an effort to improve the sediment management conditions. The **Littoral Cell Investigation** was recently completed, which outlined some deficiencies found in the sediment management system. One recommendation of the study was for detailed analysis of possible options to improve the shoreline conditions. A **Sediment Management Study** has been proposed, which will look at beach nourishment and harbour by-pass options for better local sediment management.

The **Grand Marais Drain Improvements, Phase 1** project between Central Avenue and Walker Road has been completed. The project included improved flow capacity and contaminated soil removal along the drain. With multiple private and public funding partners involved, this project was a major success with respect to partner cooperation. Detailed engineering for Phase 2 has begun and will continue into early next year, with subsequent construction planned for the summer of 2009.

A study of the **Grand Marais Drain** concrete channel has begun. This project will include a study of flood potential and remedial works along most of the Grand Marais Drain in the City of Windsor. This work will continue into 2009.

Brushing along the **Cahill Drain** in LaSalle was conducted late in the year to improve the flow conditions of this flood control channel. Selected trees, which would normally impede water flow and possibly cause flooding during extreme events, were removed to reduce this risk.

Several projects were completed in the Town of Lakeshore in 2008, including **Puce River Ice Management Dredging, Lakeview Park Shoreline Works, Belle River Causeway Erosion Protection, and Belle River Watercourse Rehabilitation.**

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) continue to be enhanced including further development of "web-based" services and the development of additional GIS "layers" and databases. Partnerships and funding sources continue to be pursued to assist further interaction with municipalities' systems.



Enhance Conservation Education & Communication

Conservation education and communication is integral to achieving ERCA's vision of realizing a sustainable, balanced environment with healthy watersheds. We educate our children today to become the environmental stewards of tomorrow. By raising awareness of the importance of conservation, we foster an enthusiasm for increased responsibility towards the environment. ERCA's communications and outreach aims to engage the community on environmental issues and be a catalyst for change across the region. ERCA's accomplishments in this area were as follows:

Public education and outreach continued to be expanded with the launch of a new look for www.erca.org. The site includes easier navigation to information such as flood advisories, media releases, and event details, as well as new features such as online camping reservation.

With 6 media events and around 100 media releases distributed in 2008, about 500 news stories were generated across the media outlets of Windsor-Essex county and beyond. Over 600 subscribers are regularly updated on news, events, programs, and services with ERCA's Watershed Quarterly e-newsletter. Additional information materials included flyers, posters, and advertising, as well as the Annual Report brochure and video, and also the Business Plan.

Staff conducted several workshops on subjects including Tree Planting, Habitat Restoration, Big Creek Watershed Plan, and Fish Species at Risk. There were 8 Drinking Water Source Protection Open Houses and 3 Colchester to Southeast Shoal Littoral Cell Open Houses. In addition, ERCA exhibited at Devonshire Mall for World Water Day, at the Home Show, and also on Family Health Day at the Vollmer Recreation Centre in LaSalle.

Effective conservation education and communication cannot be achieved alone - developing and maintaining working relationships with partners in the community is an ongoing process that enables ERCA to leverage a variety of educational and promotional opportunities. RBC Gates Open Day encouraged families to experience the outdoors while learning more about watersheds, conservation, and the importance of clean water. Also, ERCA again partnered with the CAW to host the Youth Environment Network Day at Holiday Beach Conservation Area.

With a total of 46 events and activities, **Friends of Watersheds** groups have been actively improving our environment cleaning up watercourses, planting trees, and educating residents on stewardship issues. In addition to environmental improvement activities such as the Friends of Turkey Creek Canoe Race and Cleanup, Friends groups also organized exciting educational events, such as the Pesticide Alternative information session.

Volunteers continue to contribute to the protection and restoration of our natural resources. Volunteers assisted with habitat and water quality restoration and enhancement projects, special events, and the protection and restoration of our heritage assets.

More than 30 **community events** were hosted at conservation areas and other locations across the region with many enjoyable activities promoting environmental education and action. Events such as Sunoco Earth Day, the Shore and Songbird Celebration, the Festival of Hawks, Locavore Lunch, and the Parade of Horse Breeds continue to be popular.

Conservation Education & Heritage Field Studies are curriculum-based, hands-on learning opportunities. More than 10,000 students learned about the importance of protecting our environment and preserving our heritage. We are grateful to our partners from CIBC and Family Tradition Foods Inc. who continue to 'Sponsor our Future' through Conservation Education. In addition, with funding from the Ministry of Energy, ERCA launched a renewable energy education program, the first of its kind in the area.



ERCA again took a leadership role in planning and implementing the annual **Essex Region Children's Water Festival**, which educates thousands of students about the critical importance of clean water to their future. The children participated in activities that encourage positive attitudes about protecting, restoring, and conserving water.

The **Essex County Demonstration Farm** was maintained to highlight current agricultural techniques, tools, and products that enhance the linkage between farming and the environment. In partnership with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the movement of nutrients to drain tile was investigated, furthering long-term efforts to minimize agricultural impacts on local water quality.

"The outdoor classroom looks FANTASTIC! We dreamed it and you helped us build it! We couldn't be more proud and pleased. The students have enthusiastically supported our efforts and are enjoying the new addition to their educational experience."

Principal Michelle Chevalier, Holy Cross School, comments on ERCA's assistance with schoolyard natural areas restoration. November 2008.

Launch of renewable energy program, Hillman Marsh, October 2008. Rick Atkin, ERCA Board Member, Pat Hoy M.P.P., Chatham-Kent-Essex, and Mill Street School students.



Holy Cross schoolyard natural area restoration, November 2008.





Hillman Marsh
Conservation Area
Solar Panels



Anthony Leardi, ERCA Board Vice
Chair emcees Provincial funding
announcement at John R. Park
Homestead. October 2008.



Removal of dormant fuel storage tank
at Detroit Heritage River Lookout

"By partnering with the Province
to implement this renewable
energy education initiative, the
Essex Region Conservation
Authority is showcasing
options for a cleaner and
greener energy future
in this region and for
Ontario."

Pat Hoy M.P.P.,
Chatham-Kent-Essex.
at Hillman Marsh
Conservation Area,
October 31, 2008



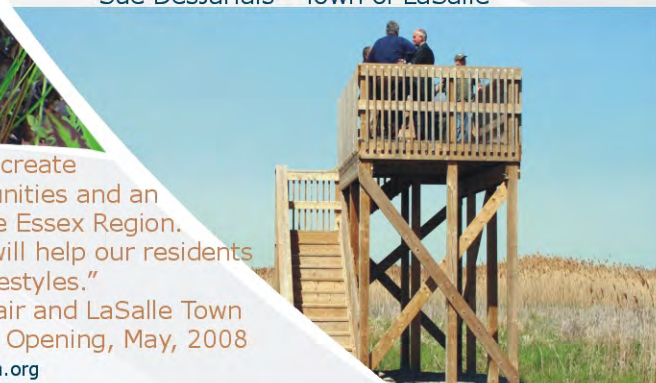
Grand Opening of Petite Cote Conservation Area May 15, 2008

left to right: Stan Taylor, Ken Schmidt - ERCA,
Terry Fink, Bill Varga, Ray Renaud, Larry Silani,
Sue DesJarlais - Town of LaSalle



"Conserving natural areas will create
a lasting legacy of recreational opportunities and an
enhanced quality of life for all residents of the Essex Region.
Providing natural areas for recreational purposes will help our residents
live more healthy and active lifestyles."

Ray Renaud, ERCA's Board of Directors Past Chair and LaSalle Town
Councillor, Petite Cote Conservation Area Grand Opening, May, 2008



Provide Nature-Based Recreational Opportunities

Green spaces help make healthy people, and recreating in natural areas has proven physical, emotional, and mental health benefits. Natural areas such as ERCA's 20 publicly accessible conservation areas also provide places for regional residents to live healthy and active lifestyles that can reduce health risks like stroke and diabetes. Physical activity, especially in a peaceful, natural setting, can help to reduce stress and promotes wellbeing. Visiting natural areas was also identified as one of the top activities in which tourists like to engage in the Essex Region. Here are some of the facility improvements that ERCA made this year to its Conservation Areas for the benefit of residents and tourists:

Detroit River Heritage Lookout A dormant underground fuel storage tank was removed to eliminate unknown risk of contamination to soil and the adjacent Detroit River, with funding from the Ministry of Environment's *Early Actions Program*. Opportunity for trail and waterfront park development is being explored for this proposed new Conservation Area.

Sadler's Pond A new dock was added to Sadler's Pond in Essex which marks the start of a fully accessible paved trail system that will be part of the ongoing development of the Essex to Amhurstburg Greenway.

Heritage Forests Continued to expand at Big Creek Conservation Area and at the Fred Cada Heritage Forest at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area. This program reforests selected tracts of land while memorializing loved ones.

Hillman Marsh Conservation Area With thanks to funding from the Kathleen-Mary and Walter Barron Family Foundation, a new roof was installed on the Nature Centre. Solar panels were placed on the new roof in partnership with the Ministry of Energy. A prescribed burn was conducted over 12 acres just southeast of the Nature Centre to promote the growth of tall grass prairie species and wildflowers and reduce the number of shrubs encroaching on the area. Following the burn the prairie soon flourished with increased wildflowers, butterflies, fox snakes, and birding activity.

Holiday Beach Conservation Area There were significant upgrades to 35 campsites thanks to a grant from Service Ontario Job Creation Partnership. Each new campsite now has picnic tables, 50 amp electrical service, and drinking water.

John R. Park Homestead and Conservation Area In its 30th year as a museum, the Homestead underwent significant restoration to the roof and clapboard of the main house with thanks to funding from the Province of Ontario, and also volunteers greatly assisted in renovating the outbuildings.

Kingsville Train Station With the approval of Kingsville Town Council and the Kingsville Heritage Committee, this historic building is now enjoyed by many more visitors following its transformation to a restaurant this year. The architectural and historic integrity of the building continues to be preserved and can now be enjoyed by the public, since it has been opened to the community.

Petite Côte Development The Grand Opening of this Conservation Area, adjacent to the Detroit River in LaSalle, was held in the spring. It offers a wetland boardwalk with a viewing tower; and an interpretive sign has been installed to celebrate the Detroit River: A Canadian Heritage River.

35 Years of Watershed Conservation

1973

On July 18, ERCA is founded as the 38th Conservation Authority in Ontario and Bob Pulleyblank is elected as the first Chairman.

1974

Maidstone and Devonwood Conservation Areas are acquired. Shore protection works are undertaken on Pelee Island. Turkey Creek floodline mapping is initiated, followed by many other mapping projects which lay the groundwork for the regulations

1975

John R. Park Homestead is acquired and restoration begins. Kopegaron Woods Conservation Area is purchased, protecting one of the region's finest Carolinian woodlands. ERCA becomes one of the first Authorities to undertake comprehensive fill and floodline mapping of the shoreline.

1976

The treeplanting program begins, adding 32,000 trees to the regional landscape. Big Creek and McAuliffe Woods Conservation Areas are acquired.

1981

In October, ERCA assists member municipalities during and after severe flooding. ERCA moves to the Essex County Civic and Education Centre. A conservation area field studies program for students is initiated in cooperation with the school boards.

1982

Provincial approval is received for floodplain regulations. Major improvements to the Little River Dykes in Windsor are initiated.

1983

The first phase of shore protection works at Assumption Centennial Park in Windsor begins. The Conservation Farm Award is established to recognize private landowner stewardship.

1984

Water quality studies are initiated in a number of watersheds. ERCA assists in establishing the Essex County Field Naturalists Club. The Report on Environmentally Significant Areas in the Essex Region is published.

1989

ERCA assists several municipalities as 16 inches of rainfall causes massive flooding during "the Harrow Flood". Work begins on the Clean Up Rural Beaches program - a province-wide effort to improve water quality by reducing upstream pollution. Raptor banding is initiated at Holiday Beach Conservation Area as part of a North American wide-effort.

1990

ERCA begins to provide large stock trees for private land conservation. Work is completed on the Hillman Marsh wetland enhancement project in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited Canada. The final phase of the \$1.4 million Belle River Flood Control Project is

1991

A \$3 million flood control project in Turkey Creek is initiated, and four National Soil Conservation Program demonstration sites are established. Shoreline regulations come into effect.

1992

Canard River Flood Control Project begins. Thirty eight Windsor locals are surveyed as possible Natural Heritage Sites, an estimated 100,000 people visit ERCA's Conservation Areas. Calculations indicate that regional natural areas coverage totals 6.2%. The United Nations identifies that at a minimum, 12% of any region must consist of natural areas to be healthy and

1997

ERCA embarks on a journey to have the Detroit River designated as a Canadian Heritage River, and assists the US in a parallel process while playing a major role in implementing Remedial Action Plan recommendations aimed at reducing non-point source pollution entering the river. Assists member municipalities and residents during a number of floods brought about

1998

ERCA coordinates protection of the historic Pelee Island lighthouse; enhances "one window" services in agreement with the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans; begins managing White Sands Beach on Boblo Island as a conservation area, and opens the first 2 km of the Chrysler

1999

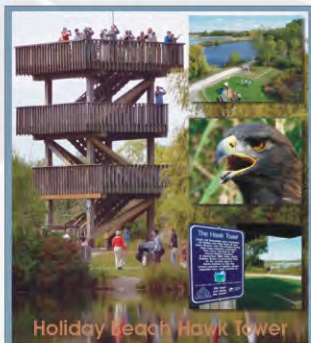
Biodiversity Conservation Strategies are developed for over half of the region's watersheds. Friends of Watersheds groups are established, and ERCA updates its Strategic Plan. The nomination of the Detroit River as a Canadian Heritage River is accepted, and the development of a Management Strategy begins. The Trans Canada Trail Foundation donates an official Pavilion to the Chrysler Canada Greenway, and the

2000

The Chrysler Canada Greenway opens to rave reviews and is host of the southern-most section of RELAY 2000. Holiday Beach Conservation Area is dedicated an 'Important Bird Area' of global significance. In the Town of Walkerton, e. coli bacteria enters the municipal water system 7 individuals die and 2,300 people, nearly half of the town's population, become ill from the affects.

2005

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment introduces the *Clean Water Act*. ERCA undertakes the associated technical work and takes a lead role in the coordination of the Emerald Ash Borer Response Natural Areas Restoration Grant Program. Mapping is updated to conform to the new 'Generic Regulation'. Improvements to Little River dykes to protect homes and alleviate downstream flooding. ERCA is a key partner in initiating the



2006

More than 200,000 trees are planted on public and private properties, and ERCA launches Canada's largest community-based seed collection program. Shoreline protection works were completed at the City of Windsor at Legacy Park.



1977

Alexander Park shore protection is completed in Windsor. ERCA acquires its first 70 acres of wetland at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area. The Essex Region Conservation Foundation is formed.

1978

Cedar Creek and Canard Valley Conservation Areas are established. A region-wide inventory of all municipal drains is undertaken. Three demonstration drain sites are established in cooperation with the Essex County Soil & Crop Improvement Association.

1979

Ruscom Shores Conservation Area is acquired protecting a significant Lake St. Clair wetland. St. Rose Beach shore protection is completed in Windsor. Flood contingency plans are developed with member municipalities.

1980

Shore protection works are completed in the Town of Belle River. A Teachers' Guide to Conservation Areas is distributed to all schools in the region.

1985

ERCA begins operating Holiday Beach Provincial Park as a Conservation Area. Repairs to the Pelee Island dykes are undertaken. Hillman Marsh Nature Centre is established. Several shore protection projects are undertaken.

1986

An extensive awareness campaign is launched to better inform municipalities of Environmentally Significant Areas within their boundaries.

1987

Little River dyke improvements are completed at a total cost of \$2.8 million. ERCA plants its one millionth tree. Thirty-six hectares (89 acres) of the Stone Road Alvar on Pelee Island are acquired.

1988

The 40 foot hawk watching tower is added to Holiday Beach. ERCA initiates its Floodproofing Assistance Program for homeowner in flood-prone areas.

1993

The final phase of Assumption Park Shoreline Improvements begins. ERCA becomes the implementing agency for a "one window" approach to issuing permits for development near water, and drain reviews.

1994

Assumption Park Shoreline Improvements are completed at a total cost of \$7.2 million. ERCA begins a biological control program for purple loosestrife, an invasive species; and ERCA approved acquisition of a 42 kilometre abandoned railway corridor.

1995

The Province of Ontario cuts funding to Conservation Authorities by 70%. ERCA's Board of Directors choose to maintain existing levels of service, requiring more creative revenue generation, fees for service, and a strengthened community partnerships.

1996

Staffing is reduced by 25%, but ERCA maintains its specialized expertise to continue effectively servicing municipalities and the public. In partnership with the Town of LaSalle and with funding assistance from the Essex Region Conservation Foundation, the first tract of the LaSalle Woodlot was purchased to ensure its protection; and the Essex County Demonstration Farm was

2001

The Detroit River is designated as a Canadian Heritage River and the only river in North America with both Canadian and American Heritage River designations. ERCA plants its 4 millionth tree. Justice Dennis O'Connor releases the finding from the Walkerton Inquiry. He identifies protecting drinking water at its source as the first barrier of defence for a safe drinking water supply, and recommends Conservation Authorities as ideally positioned to lead this charge.

2002

ERCA releases its first Water Quality Report Card, and natural areas coverage reaches 7.5%. The Clean Water ~ Green Spaces initiative is launched to help share the responsibility of a healthier environment and accelerate the pace towards sustainability. 26 kilometres of abandoned railway are donated thanks to the success of the existing greenway.

2003

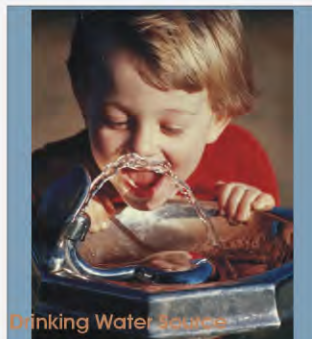
Completion of an 80 acre shorebird habitat at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area, and completion of restoration at the historically and architecturally significant Kingsville Train Station.

2004

The Province of Ontario identifies 100% funding for Conservation Authorities to progress protecting drinking water at its source. Improved habitat for the Prothonotary Warbler and Lake Sturgeon. A significant rainfall event causes flooding in Southeast Leamington, and concerns are raised regarding the long-term sustainability of this flood and erosion-prone area.

2007

The draft Watershed Characterization report is submitted for peer review, and a Source Protection Education program is created. ERCA receives its first Conservation Easement from a private landowner allowing important conservation lands to be protected. The Clean Water~Green Spaces Habitat Restoration program results in the naturalization of over 235 acres, and an Aquatic Species at Risk Recovery Strategy



Drinking Water Source

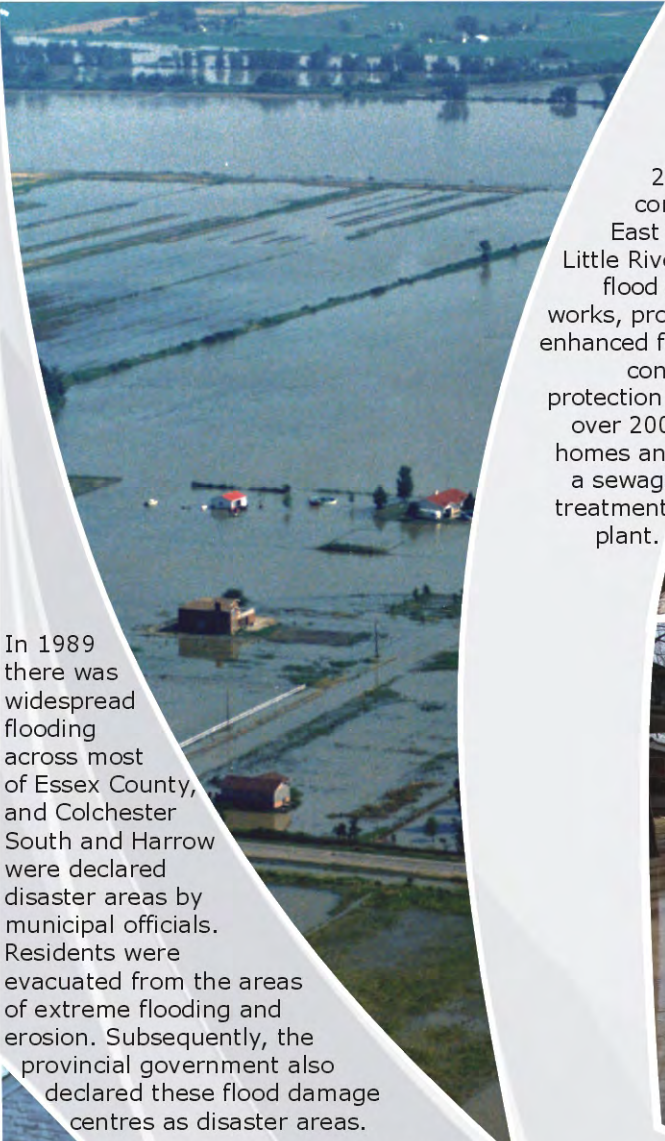
2008

35 years in conservation. The Source Protection Committee, in its first year of operation, completed a Terms of Reference to guide the preparation of the Source Protection Plan through 2012. John R. Park Homestead benefits from significant restoration. Petite Côte Conservation Area opens. Completion of the Fighting Island Sturgeon Habitat Restoration Project. It is widely agreed that climate change is occurring at an accelerated pace. ERCA plants its 5



5 million trees

Natural Hazards Past and Present



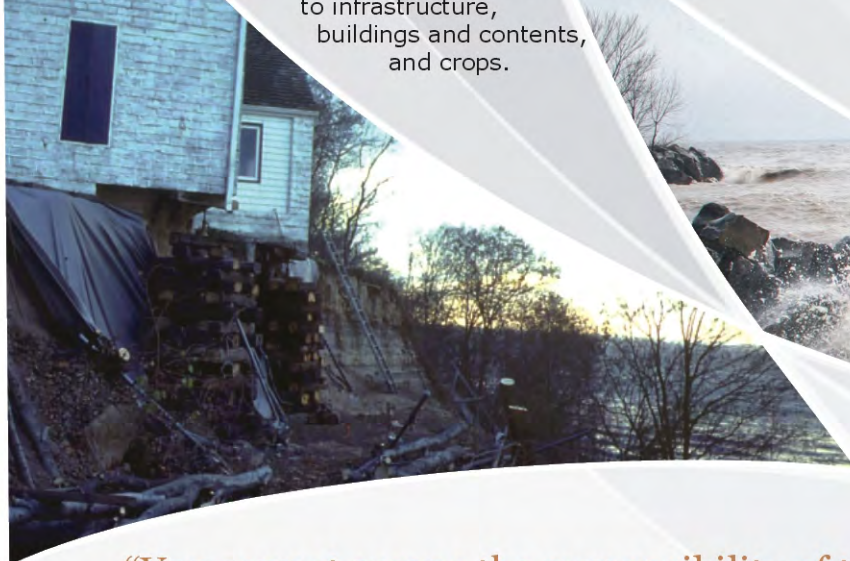
2008 saw the completion of East Riverside Little River Dykes flood control works, providing enhanced flood control protection for over 2000 homes and a sewage treatment plant.

In 1989 there was widespread flooding across most of Essex County, and Colchester South and Harrow were declared disaster areas by municipal officials. Residents were evacuated from the areas of extreme flooding and erosion. Subsequently, the provincial government also declared these flood damage centres as disaster areas.

ERCA conducted a Flood Damage Survey after which it compiled preliminary damage estimates at \$44 to \$55 million (in 1989 dollars), primarily to infrastructure, buildings and contents, and crops.



Cotterie Park, on Lake Erie north of Hillman Marsh, experienced significant flooding, April 2008. Tim Byrne, ERCA Flood and Erosion Control Coordinator, informing the public.



**“You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”
Abraham Lincoln**

Stewardship Past and Present



Michael Dick, ERCA Soil and Water Conservation Technician, discusses stewardship plans with a local farmer.



Post-project monitoring in 2008 identified a local wetland restoration site to be flourishing.



ERCA partners with the community in 2008 on tree planting projects that create natural areas for habitat and recreation.



Rock chutes are an important technique for controlling erosion. They stabilize actively eroding farm fields and reduce the transport of contaminants to creeks and rivers.



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