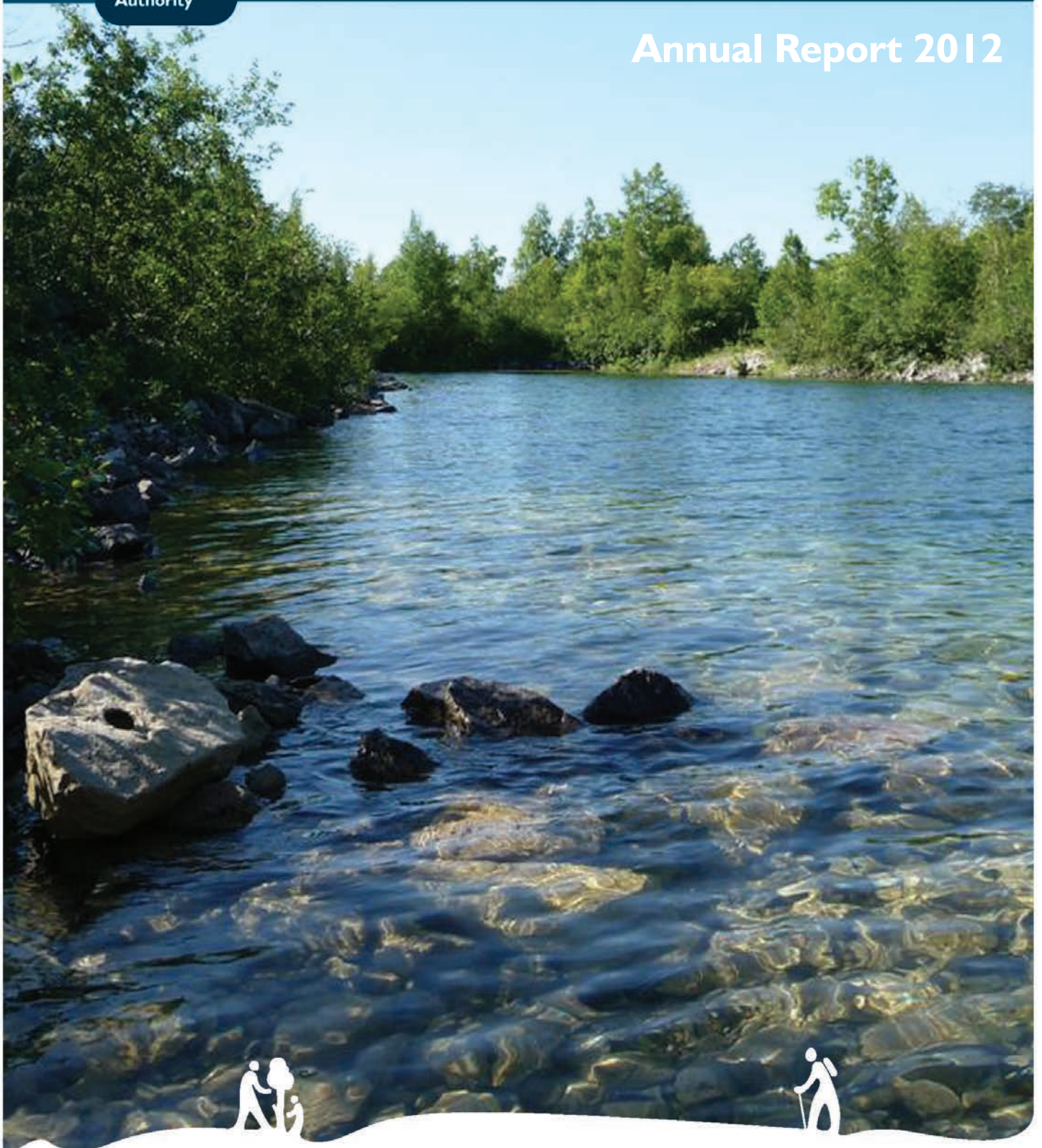




Essex Region
Conservation
Authority

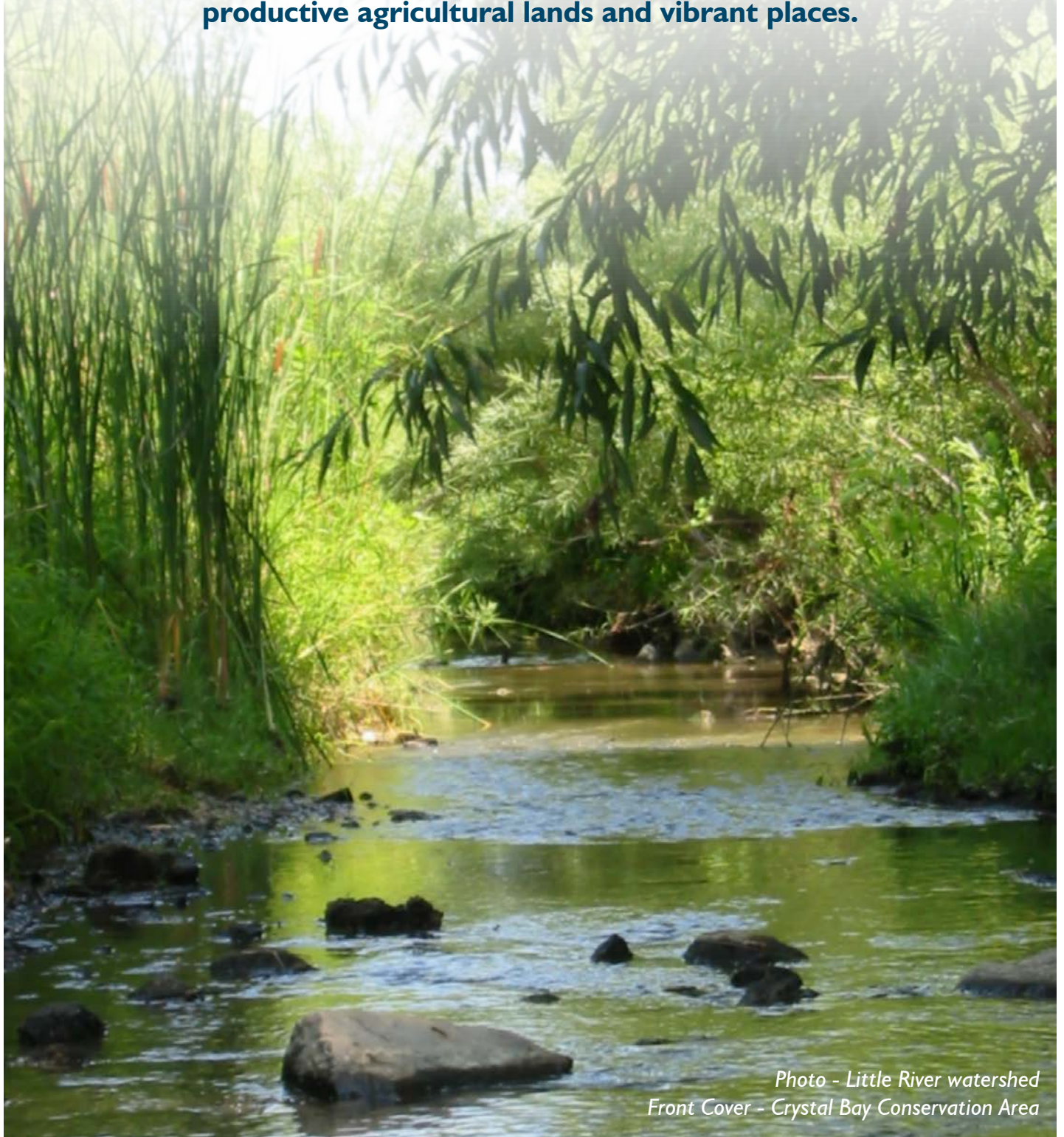


Annual Report 2012



Our Vision for 2020

To achieve a sustainable environment with healthy watersheds, highlighted by clean creeks, rivers and Great Lakes, thriving natural areas, productive agricultural lands and vibrant places.



*Photo - Little River watershed
Front Cover - Crystal Bay Conservation Area*



Message from the Chair and General Manager

*"Dripping water hollows out stone,
not through force but through persistence."*

— Ovid



Reflecting back on 2012, there's no question that the Essex Region Conservation Authority's perseverance in working toward a future of sustainability has continued to yield results. We confirmed that our natural areas coverage had risen, we signed a collaborative agreement identifying the Western Lake Erie Watersheds as Canada's first Priority Natural Area, completed our Source Protection Plan and so much more. These projects and others we celebrate are a culmination of years of continued commitment, dedication and resilience.

2012 marked the 39th year of our existence and over the past nearly four decades, ERCA has weathered many storms – literal and figurative. Through our establishment in 1973 and the exciting years of our beginning, to the virtually crippling government cutbacks in the mid-90s, ERCA stayed the course and emerged a stronger organization. We've remained tenacious through uncertain times, demonstrated our value to our municipal partners, been creative in establishing partnerships and developed a strong business model for the work that we do – protecting and restoring our natural environment; connecting people to nature and protecting people and property from natural hazards.

Like the dripping water, our achievements are a result not of force, but of persistence. They are the cumulative impact of the efforts of thousands of volunteers. They are the victory of working with hundreds of landowners to restore one acre of habitat at a time. They are the triumph of seeing our municipal partners embrace the work that we do and recognize it as critical to creating a place where people want to live, work and invest.

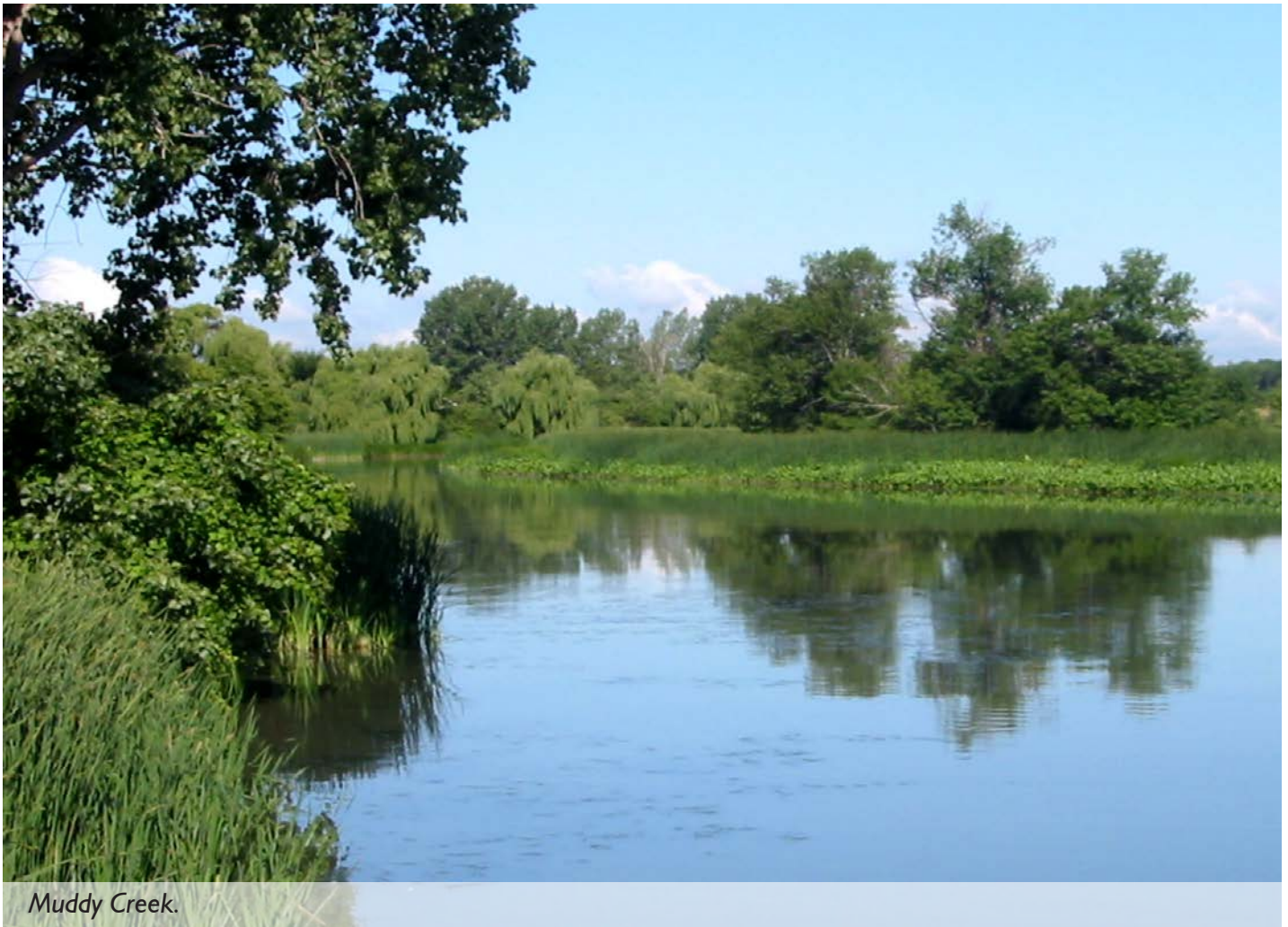
Some of our past year's highlights are included on the following pages. Our projects are varied and many. Over time, we see that our perseverance pays off and we grow more sustainable as a community. As we begin our 40th year of conservation, let us celebrate these successes and look forward with renewed vigour, knowing that we will reach our conservation goals.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Percy Hatfield".

Percy Hatfield
Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Wyma".

Richard Wyma
General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer



Muddy Creek.

2012 Highlights

The following highlights from 2012 illustrate some of the many programs and services ERCA has undertaken in this past year toward creating a future of sustainability. All of our programs continue to focus on achieving our strategic priorities: to connect, engage, collaborate and discover.

The final pages provide snapshot of the breadth of the programs and services we implement, organized by strategic priority, to create a healthier future for the Essex Region.



Saw-whet Owl.



A Red Tail Hawk takes flight at Holiday Beach Conservation Area.

ERCA strives to connect people to our landscape, waterfronts and our Great Lakes and rivers with attractive natural areas, trails and Conservation Areas as part of a vibrant and sustainable community.

Holiday Beach Best in Canada and Third Best in North America for Hawk Watching

In the September/October edition of *Audubon Magazine*, the award winning magazine of the National Audubon Society that boasts nearly 1.8 million readers, Holiday Beach Conservation Area was named the third best in North America for Hawk Watching and was the only Canadian site to even make the list.

Penned by internationally renowned birder and author Kenn Kaufman, *Ten Awesome Places to Catch One of Nature's Greatest Spectacles* identifies the geography of Holiday Beach and its partner site at Lake Erie Metropark in Detroit, Michigan as premier hawk viewing locations. Spanning hundreds of miles

along the Canadian border, the Great Lakes represent a barrier for migrating hawks, most of which avoid traveling over open water. The geography at Holiday Beach allows large groups of raptors gather to funnel across a narrow crossing point. They move along Lake Erie's north shore until they cross the border into Michigan and turn southward again.

The hawk watch volunteers at the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory and the Detroit River Hawk Watch carefully collect migration data. Tens of thousands of hawks and falcons fly past every fall, highlighted by big flights of broad-wings in September. Holiday Beach was previously named an Important Bird Area of international significance by Bird Studies Canada in 2000.



The split rail fence has been rebuilt at the John R. Park Homestead Conservation Area

Visitor Services Improved at Conservation Areas

Many enhancements were made this year to improve facilities for our visitors. At Holiday Beach, the sewage pumps were upgraded and drainage improved at Marshview campground. We also upgraded the hydro and implemented a Camp Host program so that visitors have a 24 hour point of contact.

Exciting changes have taken place at Hillman Marsh. A new boardwalk has been constructed using recycled lumber, an environmentally friendly product that also redirects plastic from landfills. As well, with support from Pelee Wings Nature Store, the Ontario Federation of Ornithologists and the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, a bird viewing shelter has been constructed at the shorebird habitat.

At the John R. Park Homestead, the split rail fence was rebuilt thanks to the volunteer efforts of the Canadian Club Questers. The Ontario Provincial Questers are helping repair the donated melodeon to add musical ambiance to the 1850's museum. The loom shed's roof was replaced to protect the integrity of this historic structure and its artifacts. The loom was donated by the Iler family and has been used in this community for more than 200 years. The Homestead offered Maple programs *en français* and hosted the Community Girl Guide Diamond Jubilee Rally for more than 200 Guides and their leaders.

ERCA's Conservation Areas Advisory Committee was also created. These representatives from a number of sectors across the community will input into and aid in developing management plans for our Conservation Areas.



Unveiling the Caesars Windsor Community Entrance

Caesars Windsor Community Entrance

Caesars Windsor kicked off the Essex Region Conservation Foundation's Trail On! campaign to raise funds to develop the Essex-Amherstburg Greenway with a lead donation of \$25,000 and an additional three year fundraising commitment in partnership with their employees.

The Essex – Amherstburg Greenway is a 22 km multi-use recreational trail which intersects the Chrysler Canada Greenway in McGregor, bringing the community's vision of a region connected by trails one step closer to reality. Since the opening of the Chrysler Canada Greenway in 2000, the 50 kilometre trail has become one of the most important trails in the region for hiking and cycling.

In recognition of Caesars Windsor's \$25,000 donation, ERCA named the entrance to the existing Chrysler Canada Greenway on County Road 8 near Walker Road the *Caesars Windsor Community Entrance*. This project provides a community-wide benefit that is not specific to one city, town or organization. Building the Essex – Amherstburg Greenway will benefit the entire population of Windsor-Essex by connecting us all through trails, providing economic benefits and leading to a healthier, more active community.



The Western Lake Erie Watershed is now Canada's first Priority Natural Area.

Engaging our community to increase awareness of conserving and enhancing our environment continues to be a focus.

Western Lake Erie Watersheds Identified as a Priority Natural Area

September 27 marked a historic day as government representatives, dignitaries and environmentalists from the United States and Canada joined ERCA to sign a collaboration agreement celebrating the designation of the Western Lake Erie Watershed as Canada's first Priority Natural Area.

The Agreement envisions enhanced collaboration and coordination of resource management programs and projects. The initiative also intends to engage the broader community in restoring, enhancing and conserving the unique environmental values and health of the area. It is anticipated that this

agreement will build on and complement existing programs, and will stimulate further actions. It is also expected to strengthen research and monitoring, and to build a liveable, sustainable future that recognizes the interconnection between a healthy environment, healthy population and healthy economy. Program successes will be achieved through the voluntary participation and agreement of partners, public and private landowners and others.

Partners include Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ducks Unlimited Canada. The initiative will provide a mechanism to work more closely with our U.S. neighbours and complement progress being made through the U.S. International Wildlife Refuge.



Thanks to the contributions of thousands of volunteers and landowners, natural areas coverage is now 8.5%.

Natural Areas Increases to 8.5%

Thanks to the incredible contributions of many partners, volunteers, organizations, school groups, landowners and others, the natural areas coverage of Windsor, Essex County and Pelee Island now totals 8.5%, bringing our region closer to the 12% goal set for our region and the minimum coverage which was established by the United Nations for any bio-region to be healthy and sustainable.

In 1973, when ERCA was established, forest cover was identified as 3.4%. By 2002, when ERCA last calculated natural areas coverage, forest, marsh, prairie and wetland habitats were included and it was determined that 7.5% of our land base was in a natural state.

Over the past decade, ERCA has planted over 1.7 million trees and restored over 2,500 acres of habitat,

and after all the work that has been done, ERCA conducted another calculation. Air photos were carefully analyzed using our state-of-the-art geographic information systems technologies and techniques and available datasets from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources were used to calculate all natural areas that exceeded 1/10 of an acre in size. Through this process, it was determined that our region has gained 1% in natural areas coverage. This totals 5.4% forest, 2.6% wetland and 0.5% of other natural land like thickets, prairie and recently planted seedling tree habitat.

Of course, there is still work to be done to achieve the sustainable future that our community desires – more landowners to work with, more trees to plant, and more habitat to be restored, while protecting those natural areas that remain.



River Canard Park was significantly enhanced with shoreline improvements and a floating fishing platform.

River Canard Park Restoration Project

River Canard Park is unique in that it is co-owned by the Towns of LaSalle and Amherstburg. In 2012, significant upgrades were made to enhance the shoreline, esthetics and habitat values of the park.

Approximately 200 metres of shoreline were restored using soft shoreline techniques to improve fish habitat and protect the park from erosion. Approximately 25 different fish species are known to feed and spawn in the Canard River, including federally and provincially rare species. A walking trail and two large viewing platforms were constructed, one of which connects to a floating fishing platform that will be especially enjoyed by children. Native trees, shrubs and wildflowers were planted and educational signage was installed to highlight the

environmental features of the Canard River. The park also has a small boat ramp which allows access for kayakers and canoeists.

Partners include ERCA, Town of LaSalle, Town of Amherstburg, Environment Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Ministry of Environment, Essex County Stewardship Network, Friends of Canard River, West Windsor Power, Amherst Quarries Ltd. and the Detroit River Canadian Cleanup.



The Conservation Legacy Strategy will help protect important natural spaces and the species that inhabit them.

Creating Conservation Legacies

This year, ERCA completed an assessment of our region's landscapes to guide ERCA's land securement and stewardship activities. As part of Canada's Carolinian Zone, the Essex Region is unique, with limited but highly diverse natural cover, the highest concentration of globally rare species in Ontario and one third of Canada's rare plant and animal species, all nestled within one of Canada's most important agricultural areas. For this reason, one of our greatest needs is to ensure the protection of the most important natural areas through securement and stewardship.

The Conservation Legacy strategy identifies a variety of options available to landowners whose properties include important natural features such as forest, wetland, creek or river valley, ranging from

Conservation Easements, outright donations and the purchase of property at fair market value. In addition to leaving a legacy of a cleaner and healthier environment, landowners can also receive a significant financial and tax benefit. Priority areas for protection include parts of the Cedar, Ruscom, Belle and Canard river watersheds as well as areas of the Pike, Turkey, Big, Wagle and Hillman creek watersheds and locations on Pelee Island.

Collaborate



ERCA's ROI is 200% for each dollar invested through levy, plus a cleaner and healthier environment.

Reaching out to engage existing and new stakeholders to create a partnership for a sustainable environment is another of ERCA's top priorities.

ERCA's Return On Investment

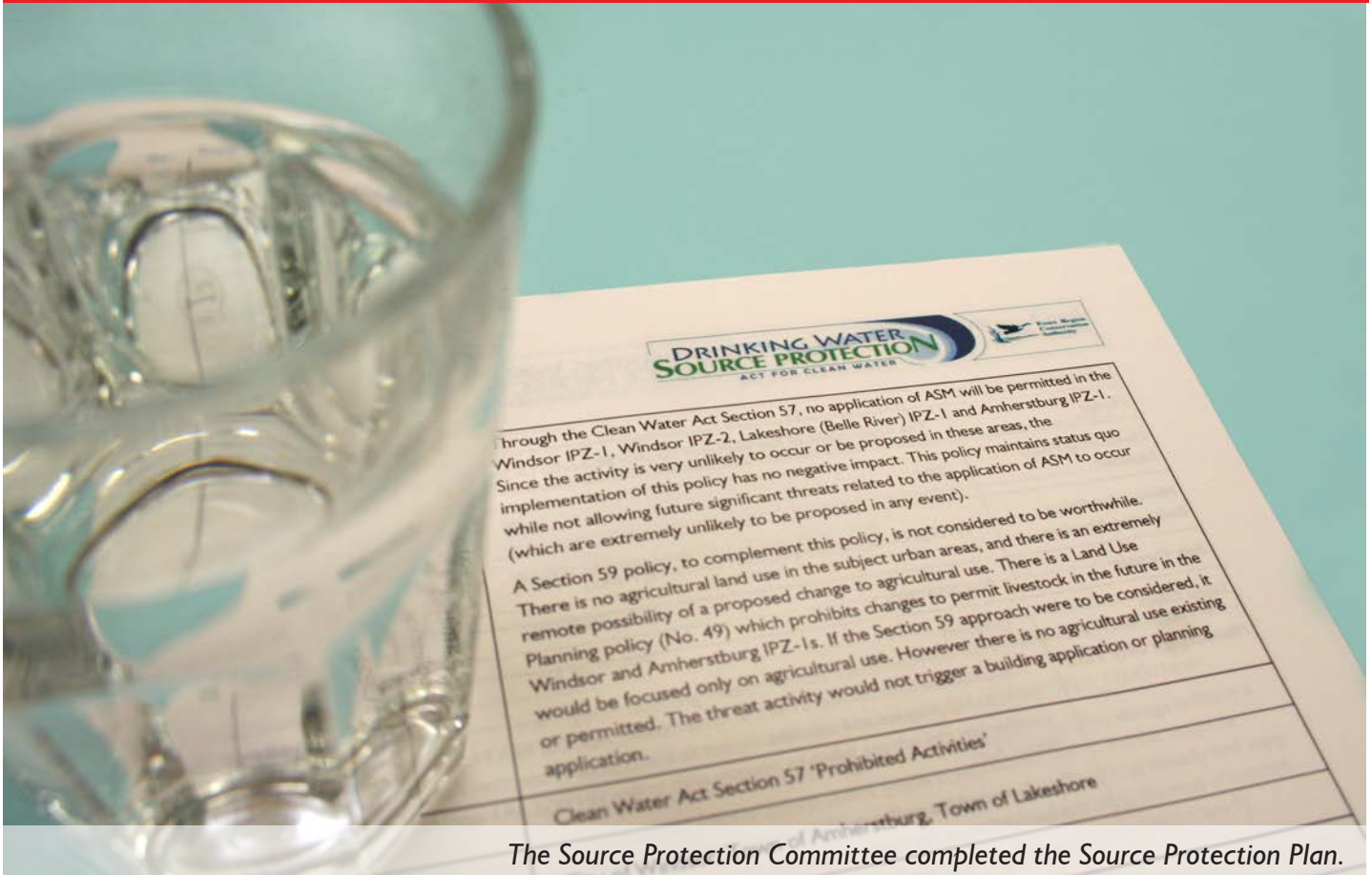
ERCA undertook a study to confirm its return on investment to our municipal partners, and identified a 'cash back' benefit to member municipalities of nearly 200% for each dollar invested through their levy.

Because ERCA is a regional, watershed based organization, and the environment does not adhere to municipal boundaries, the figures were rather difficult to assign. For instance, a water quality improvement project undertaken in the Town of LaSalle arguably benefits all municipalities in the Detroit River watershed.

However, taking a conservative approach, it was identified that over the last five years, ERCA has

received \$11.8 million in levy funding from all municipalities, and returned almost \$30 million in grant funding to municipalities and the region. This is in hard cash for specific projects that otherwise would have come out of municipal budgets and over and above the programs and services ERCA implements to improve our regional environment.

ERCA obtained more grants than was paid to them in municipal levy for all but one municipality, with the net benefit ranging from \$1 million to nearly \$4 million per municipality. This is in addition to the work ERCA undertakes towards creating a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable environment.



The Source Protection Committee completed the Source Protection Plan.

ERCA also works at developing greater scientific knowledge of our region in order to adapt to climate change and respond to its impact on the safety, health and economic wellbeing of residents.

Proposed Source Protection Plan Completed

The Essex Region Source Protection Committee completed the Proposed Source Protection Plan which was submitted to the Province for approval. The Plan contains policies to address activities considered to be a significant threat to sources of drinking water, or could become a significant threat in the future. These policies protect drinking water for the eight municipal drinking water systems in the Essex Region Source Protection Area.

Since 2008, the Committee, a Municipal Working Group, and other partners have been working toward the completion of this plan. It builds on the findings of the Assessment Report by establishing policies to

address significant threats to drinking water quality, identifying who is responsible to take action and setting timelines for policy implementation and monitoring. Where possible, the Source Protection Plan makes use of existing regulations and recognizes or reinforces existing management practices relevant to drinking water source protection.

Source protection plans will be implemented by organizations including municipalities, ERCA and provincial government agencies.



ERCA continues to plan for the anticipated impacts of climate change.

Photograph from Commander Chris Hadfield.

Climate Change Research

ERCA continued to work with our municipal partners to identify the potential impacts of climate change on the region's publicly owned infrastructure. Research predicts weather changes that include less precipitation during the summer. When rain does fall, it is expected to fall with more intensity and in greater volumes. Warmer air temperatures will likely result in more ice breakup periods, increasing the risks of flooding due to ice jams and erosion damage. Surface water temperatures in the Great Lakes are also expected to increase by as much as 5° C, which causes a variety of concerns. As well, stormwater management will be impacted by the intensity of the expected rainfall events.

ERCA is currently working with both the City of Windsor and Town of Essex in drafting climate change

adaptation plans. Stormwater management, one of ERCA's key roles, is identified as one of the most impacted areas due to climate change. ERCA also began working with municipalities to update the Intensity Duration Frequency curve (IDF curve), a scientific study is used to ensure that the region's stormwater management design standards are more resilient to these anticipated weather patterns to minimize future costs and liabilities and ensure municipal infrastructure is designed to an adequate standard.

Extreme weather has already cost Ontario residents hundreds of millions of dollars due to damage to infrastructure and property, and these costs are expected to increase as the climate changes to more extreme levels. As a community, we need to prepare for the effects of climate change and ensure we are adaptable and resilient to its impacts.



Hundreds of cyclists participated in the first Canada South Coast Bike Tour

Connect



	2010	2011	2012
Number of trees planted & distributed	163,843	170,500	146,700
Acres of habitat restored			
Detroit River Watersheds	39	57	54
Lake St. Clair Watersheds	33	21	8
Lake Erie Watersheds	83	64	77
Acres of natural areas acquired	357	81	0
Value of acquisitions by ERCA (fair market value)	\$199,000	\$225,000	n/a
Cost of ERCA's contributions	\$91,000	\$126,000	n/a
% of ERCA's contribution	46%	56%	n/a
\$ contributed to partnership acquisitions	\$600,000	\$343,000	n/a
Acres of land owned and managed	3959	4039	4039
Metres of Shoreline Stabilized and Enhanced	200	550	200
Kilometres of Trail owned and managed	75	79	79
Number of Visitors to John R. Park Homestead	11664	15591	12918
Number of Day Use Visitors to Holiday Beach	10764	8142	6724
Number of camping nights	1782	1273	1251
Number of seasonal campsites purchased	40	46	44
Number of ERCA hosted special events	25	23	17



Over 7358 students took part in outdoor education programs this year.

Engage

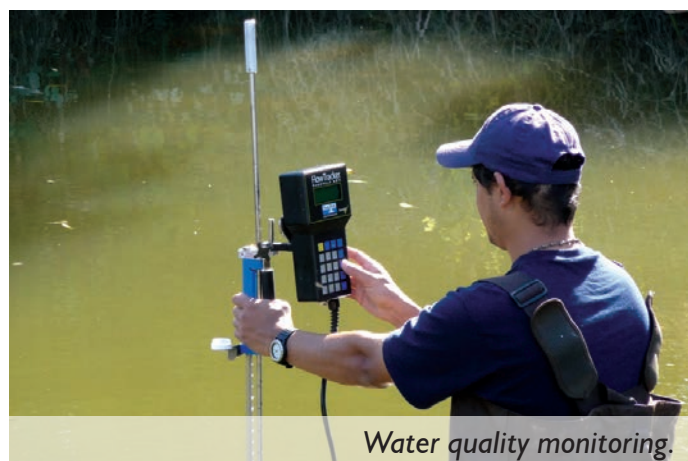


	2010	2011	2012
Watershed Population	348,617	338,595	333,529
Number of Students Participating in Outdoor Education Programs	7340	7631	7358
Number of Volunteers	2659	1661	2080
Number of Public Meetings/Workshops Hosted	4	3	15
Number of Friends of Watersheds Events	49	39	52
Number of Schoolyard Naturalization Projects Completed	21	11	9
Number of Local Committees, Boards and Advisory Panels with ERCA representation	14	14	17
Number of Provincial Committees, Boards and Advisory Panels with ERCA representation	11	11	9
Permanent Full-Time Staff	29	29	29
Average Full-Time staff length of service	12	14	15
Seasonal and Contract FTE	16	15	16

Collaborate



	2010	2011	2012
Number of Permits Reviewed, Processed and Approved	503	459	568
General Inquiries for Planning and Regulations	1485	1567	1557
Average Response Time for Permits: Minor Development (Single Family residential, clearances, etc.)	*	10.68 days	7.48 days
Average Response Time for Permits: Major Development (Requiring engineering or other detailed analysis)	*	33.23 days	29.32 days
Average Response Time for Permits: Alteration to Waterways (Requiring engineering/DFO/MNR approvals or analysis)	*	14.55 days	7.83 days
Number of Violations Issued	24	16	12
\$ Value of Water and Infrastructure Control Contributions to Municipalities	\$1,788,738	\$356,000	\$204,000
Number of Flood/Wind Advisories Issued	3	11	3



Discover

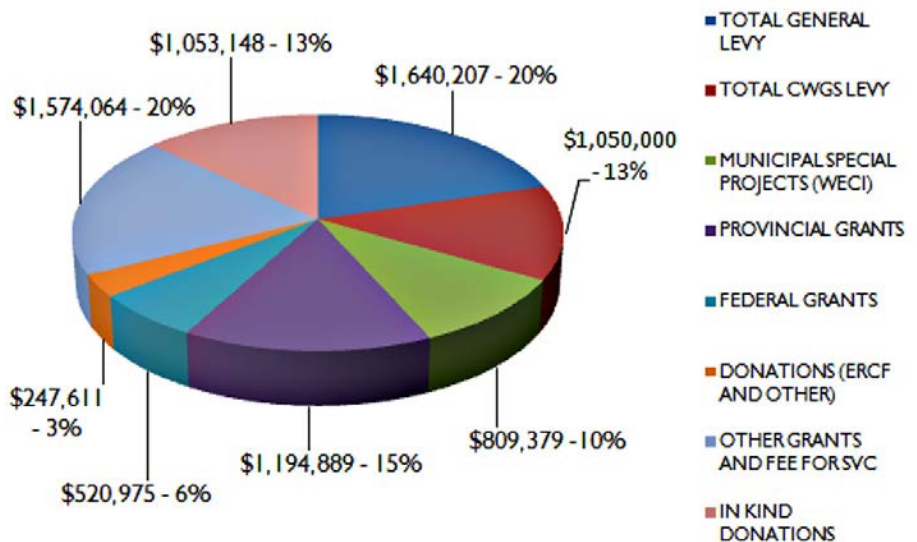


	2010	2011	2012
Number of Water Quality Improvement Projects Implemented (rock chutes, buffer strips, etc).			
Detroit River Watersheds	18	13	13
Lake St. Clair Watersheds	11	4	8
Lake Erie Watersheds	24	16	11
Number of Surface Water Quality Sites monitored	60	24	39
Number of Groundwater Quality Sites monitored	8	8	8
Number of Stream Cleanups Conducted	6	3	5

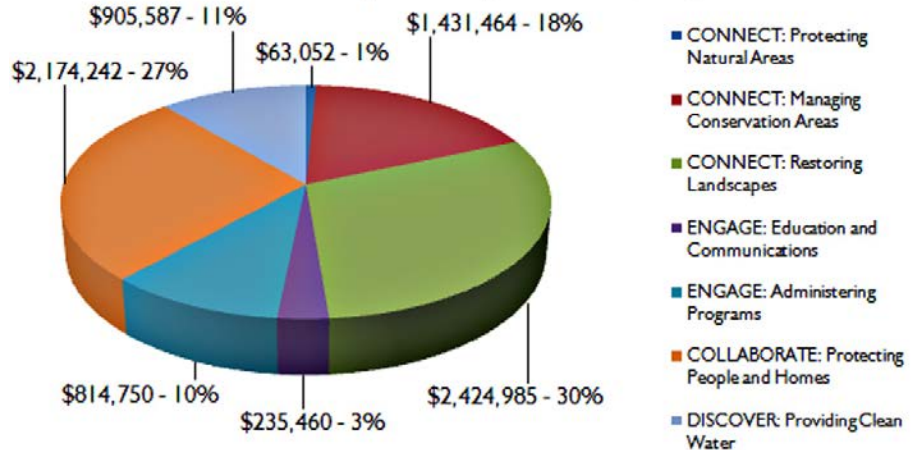
2012 Financial Review

In accordance with the Public Sector Accounting Board PS 3150, ERCA incorporates tangible capital assets into the Financial Statements. Identifying assets and their limited useful lives increases our understanding of using capital assets in the delivery of services. This information gives municipal councils and the public a better understanding of the true financial position.

2012 Draft Projected Revenues - \$8,090,274

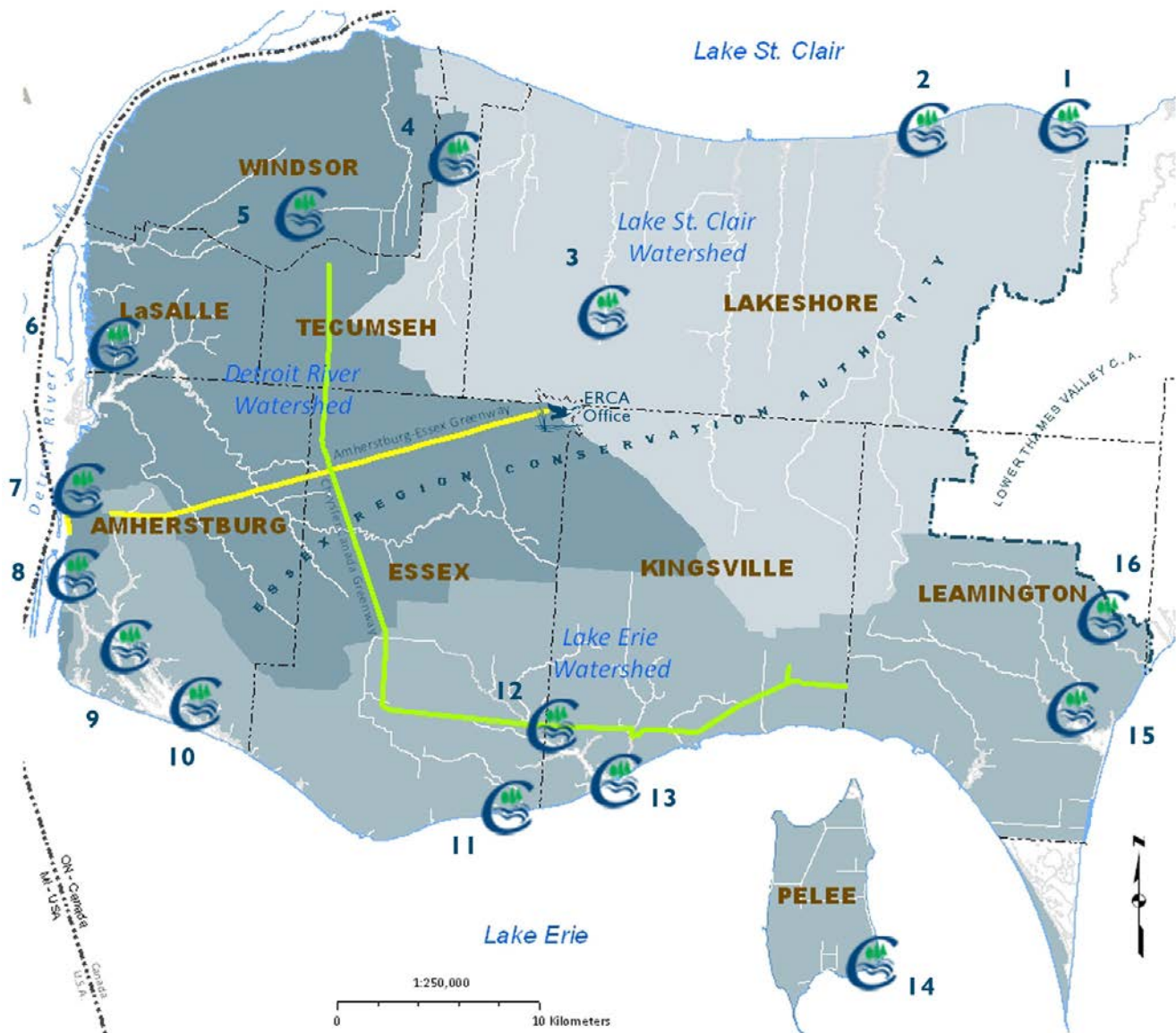


2012 Draft Projected Expenses - \$8,049,039



Note: The 2012 unaudited revenues and expenses are based on information available as of January 14, 2013 and as such the numbers are subject to change. These numbers also represent the information which will appear in the Statement of Operations, however due to the accounting for tangible capital assets (PSAB 3150) and non-cash items such as amortization, the Statements of Net Debt and Cash Flow should also be referred to in the audited Financial Statements. Acquisition of capital assets is included in totals shown for Managing Conservation Areas. After factoring in non-cash items and increases in non-financial assets such as capital asset additions, the net debt is not expected to significantly change for 2012. The projected surplus of \$40,000 will be transferred to restricted warranty reserves. The Audited Financial Statements will be available in June 2013 and include all Statements and Schedules as required by GAAP for public sector entities.

Make healthy and active lifestyles a priority for your family. Visit any of the region's conservation areas to hike, bike and enjoy nature and each other.



- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Tremblay Beach | 6. Petite Côte | 11. John R. Park Homestead |
| 2. Ruscom Shores | 7. Crystal Bay | 12. Cedar Creek |
| 3. Maidstone | 8. White Sands | 13. Cedar Beach |
| 4. McAuliffe Woods | 9. Big Creek | 14. Stone Road Alvar |
| 5. Devonwood | 10. Holiday Beach | 15. Hillman Marsh |
| | | 16. Kopegaron Woods |





**Essex Region
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360 Fairview Avenue West, Suite 311, Essex, ON, Canada, N8M 1Y6 | P 519-776-5209 | F 519-776-8688

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