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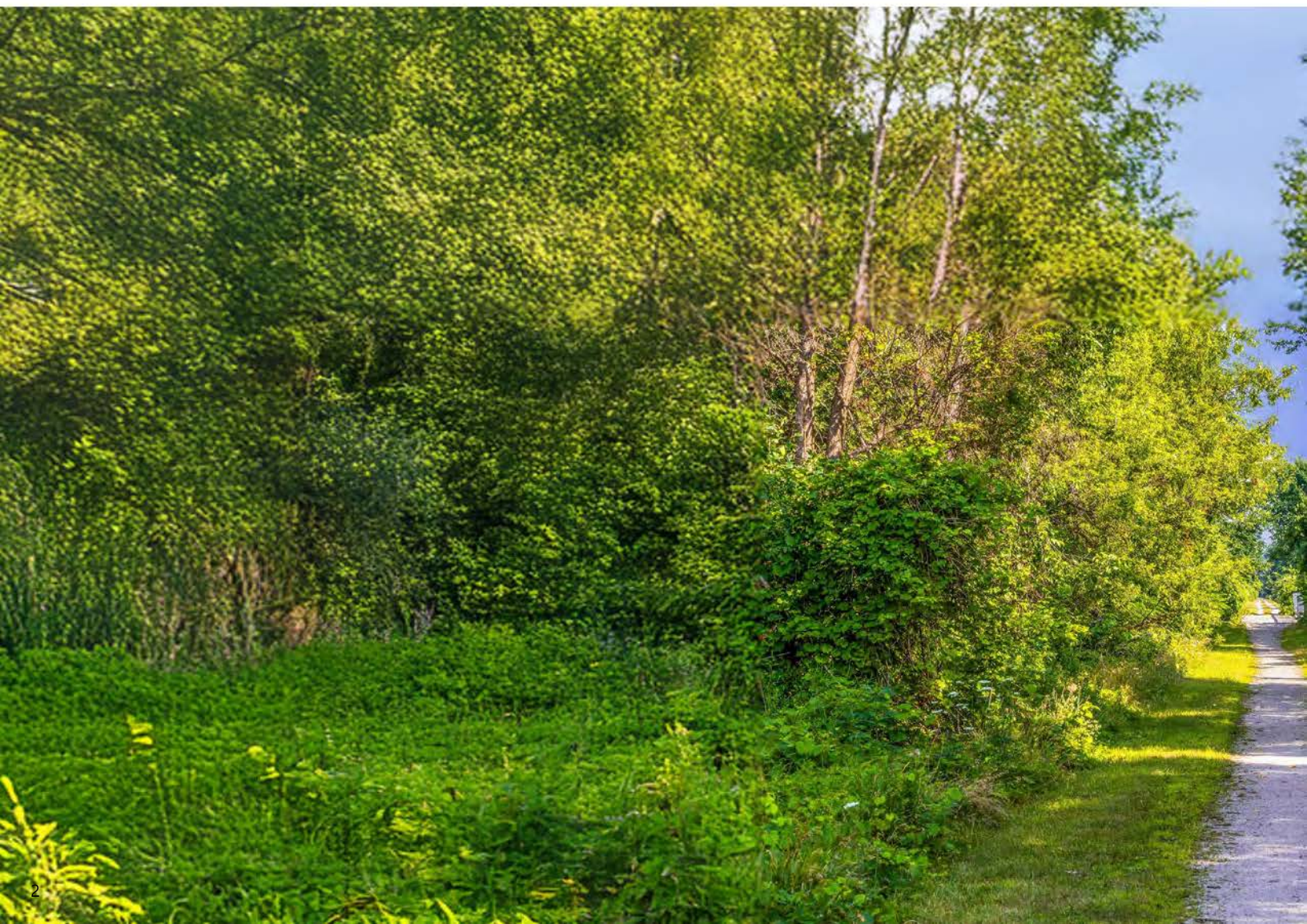
Annual Report





Land Acknowledgement

The Essex region is the traditional territory of the Caldwell First Nation, members of the Three Fires Confederacy, comprised of the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi Peoples. We value the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all the Original Peoples of Turtle Island - North America who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial.



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A Message From The Chair



2024 was a year filled with many conservation successes for our region, and it was my honour to serve as ERCA's Chair. We were extremely grateful to receive \$15 million from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Changes' Great Lakes Fresh Water Ecosystem Initiative to undertake two habitat restoration projects in the Detroit River Area of Concern, and to commence the significant restoration work at Hillman Marsh. These projects will have a profound impact on the well-being of our local watershed region.

It was a pleasure to speak with many of the thousands of visitors to our 17 public conservation areas, and to undertake significant upgrades to the parking facilities at Devonwood and Maidstone Conservation Areas to improve accessibility and safety for our guests. It was also exciting to witness the historic restoration of the John R. Park Homestead museum to ensure its sustainability for generations to come.

This year also marked the first whereby Cost Apportioning Agreements were required to undertake the programs and services identified by the Province of Ontario as non-mandatory. Through these negotiations, municipalities identified that ERCA's longstanding watershed-based approach to resource management was highly valued.

I would like to express my tremendous gratitude to our dedicated staff, our supportive partners, and our committed Board members as we reflect on these achievements of the past year. As we look to the future and work toward meeting our 2025 goals, we will remain steadfast in our commitment to creating a future of environmental sustainability for the Windsor-Essex County-Peel Island region.

Sincerely,

Jim Morrison, Chair

A Message From The CAO



This year, ERCA again continued to navigate ongoing changes to our legislative landscape. Our staff worked vigilantly to complete ERCA's Watershed-Based Resources Strategy and Conservation Areas Strategy in accordance with provincial direction, and without incurring the costs of outside consultants. We continued to assist municipalities in mitigating flood plain hazards and any potential downstream effects of significant developments projects, and made continued progress in transforming our Property Information Management System to further improve administrative efficiency and service to our customers.

I was proud for the opportunity to work directly with the Caldwell First Nation on their successful application to the federal government for \$15 million to upgrade the Hillman Marsh southern dyke and protect over 3440 hectares of vulnerable lands, which includes numerous buildings, businesses, and infrastructure.

We compiled the environmental impact of 20 years of municipal investment into the Clean Water~Green Spaces program and the profound impact it has had across the entire watershed region.

It was difficult to witness the challenges municipalities experienced as a result of O.Reg 596/22, which prohibits Conservation Authorities from providing science-based information about matters pertaining to natural heritage. Eliminating conservation authorities as a centralized resource has increased timelines and costs for municipalities as they must seek independent consultation for advice with respect to the natural environment.

As I begin my 40th year of service, it is my hope for 2025 and beyond that ERCA, and all conservation authorities, can continue to promote a productive dialogue with our Provincial government in re-establishing a planning process that includes all the principles upon which conservation authorities were established – a science-based approach to natural resource management that considers the holistic impact to the entire watershed region.

Yours in conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Byrne'.

Tim Byrne,
Chief Administrative
Officer/Secretary-Treasurer



Clean Water ~ Green Spaces 20 Years of Conservation Investments

This year, a comprehensive review of the impact of two decades of investment through the Clean Water ~ Green Spaces (CW~GS) program was undertaken.

In 2003, municipal leaders from across the region supported the Clean Water~Green Spaces initiative, which was developed to proactively address the critical environmental needs of the Windsor-Essex-Pelee Island community. This program recognized the need to address water quality issues and increase habitat and biodiversity in an effort to achieve the United Nations minimum target of 12% natural areas coverage by providing an incentive for environmental stewardship. For more than 20 years, through the CW~GS program, ERCA has been championing efforts in the region under this historic municipal levy umbrella with three key program areas:

- Land acquisition of strategic ecologically significant properties under ERCA's Land Securement Strategy,
- Tree planting and restoration on non-ERCA/municipal or private lands, and
- Water quality and agricultural stewardship programs (Best Management Practices "BMP"s, and non-point source initiatives).

Through this program, significant strides toward environmental sustainability have been achieved.



\$14.8 Million

of municipal Clean Water~Green Spaces
funding invested in the regional environment



\$15.2 Million

of funding leveraged from other sources,
including provincial, federal and other grants

\$12.8 Million

Invested in Protecting Natural Areas

(\$10.5m municipal / \$2.3m leveraged)



1935 Acres

of Property Protected

\$9.9 Million

Invested in Restoration Projects

(\$2.1m municipal / \$7.8m leveraged)



2.7 Million

Trees Planted



63 Acres

of Wetlands Created



100 Acres

of Prairies Planted

\$2.5 Million

Invested in Water Quality
Improvement Projects

(\$1.4m municipal / \$1.1m leveraged)



**1088 Water Quality
Improvement Projects**

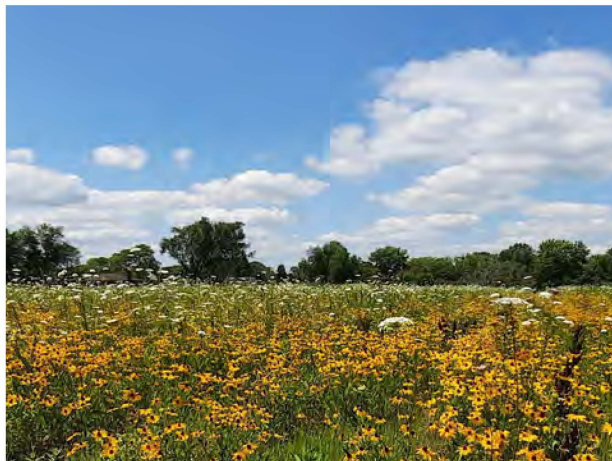
Implemented (including rock chutes, buffer
strips, wells decommissioned, septic upgrades)

\$4.7 Million

Invested in Water Quality
Research and Monitoring



**Hundreds of Thousands
of Samples Collected**





WATERSHED MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Watershed Management Services ensure that development in the region progresses in a sustainable manner and is directed away from natural hazards. Managing the risks associated with the natural hazards of flooding and erosion is one of ERCA's most fundamental priorities which has been delivered through multiple natural resource management programs and services, including flood and erosion hazard mapping, water and erosion control infrastructure planning, and development reviews and permitting.

2024 WATERSHED MANAGEMENT SERVICES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Evaluated 779 applications and issued 678 permits to ensure new development is safe from natural hazards and to protect upstream and downstream communities.

Responded to over 1561 property information inquiries related to questions about property matters, received from landowners, developers, and prospective purchasers with questions concerning a potential property purchase.

Reviewed 23 Official Plan Amendments and 104 Zoning Bylaw Amendments to ensure local planning decisions address provincial delegated responsibilities relative to natural hazards.

Updated policies and procedures to comply with numerous CA Act and regulatory changes, including Ontario Regulation 41/24: Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses and Ontario Regulation 42/24: Mandatory Programs and Services, all of which took effect on April 1, 2024.

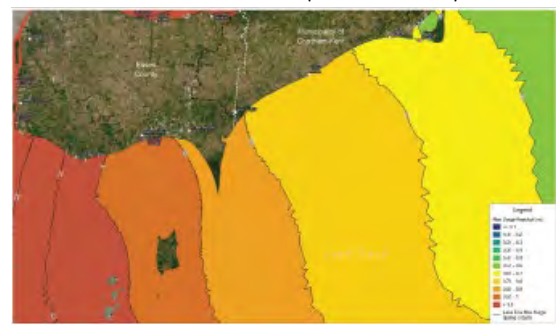
Completed the Watershed-Based Resources Management Strategy to enhance the delivery of Mandatory Programs and Services by assessing any challenges, identifying risks that impact service delivery, and providing mitigative measures to ensure such challenges and risks are adequately addressed. This strategy may help identify desirable future programs, services, and actions that will help ERCA meet its objectives and long-term goals.

Completed new shoreline flood and erosion hazard mapping to replace the original mapping completed in 1976. These regulatory maps reflect current conditions along the nearly 200 kilometres of shoreline within the Region. Through ERCA's partnership with the County of Essex, the region and local municipalities benefited in \$240,000 of federal grant funding to support project completion.

Completed updates to the Windsor-Essex Region Stormwater Manual, in partnership with all local and upper tier municipalities, to provide consistent guidance to practitioners, while encouraging purposeful deviations from standardized approach with supporting rationale.



Maximum storm surge residual across all 14 simulations (Lake St. Clair)





CONSERVATION SERVICES

Conservation programs protect, restore, and manage natural heritage systems within ERCA's watersheds. Conservation Areas and trails provide natural habitat linkages and essential places for people to connect with nature for physical and mental well-being. Locally, our habitats are among the most significant in Canada. Since ERCA's inception, nearly 7 million trees have been planted, and the percentage of our region's land base that consists of natural areas has grown from 3% to 8.5%. Continuing to strategically plant trees and restore habitat, while protecting existing natural areas, will be critical to securing a future of environmental sustainability.

2024 CONSERVATION SERVICES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Planted over 60,800 trees and restored 54 acres of land to natural habitat, including 14 acres of new habitat at The Jack Miner Migratory Bird Sanctuary, with funding from Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), Forests Ontario, Ontario Power Generation and the Canadian Wildlife Federation. This habitat restoration project increases biodiversity and natural areas cover, provides habitat for species at risk, and connects existing Carolinian forest habitat at the site. The entire project included a one-acre wetland feature, a surrounding 1.5 acre native prairie grass/wet meadow buffer, and approximately 11.5 acres of afforestation with 8400 native trees and shrubs.

Created over 42 new acres of wetland habitat, including a 40 acre wetland adjacent to Cedar Creek in the Town of Kingsville which included a significant fish recovery effort.

Completed the Conservation Areas Strategy as required by Ontario Regulation 686/21. The Strategy informs ERCA's decision-making with respect to conservation areas management and land acquisition. Its key objectives are to protect people from natural hazards, conserve natural areas, and connect people to the natural environment through conservation areas and trails across the watershed.

Implemented Phase 1 of the Hillman Marsh Restoration Management Plan to restore habitat lost in this Provincially Significant Wetland, stabilize the eroding shoreline and improve resilience to climate change, using both traditional engineering and nature-based solutions. Engineering for Phase 2 of this project was also initiated.



2024 CONSERVATION SERVICES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Discovered the aquatic invasive plant, *Hydrilla*, in the West Cell at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area. This is the first detection of this invasive plant in Ontario and Canada. This rapidly growing invasive species can choke out native species and clog water intake pipes, boat motors and impede other recreational activities like swimming and paddling. Hydrilla is a prohibited invasive species under Ontario's Invasive Species Act 2015. Immediate action was taken to contain the species and ERCA, working with a number of organizations and agencies, undertook initial steps towards eradication of this invasive species.

Undertook significant structural repairs totalling over \$1 million at the historic home of John and Amelia Park to ensure the long-term sustainability of the museum.

Added two CoastReach stations to Holiday Beach Conservation Area, allowing guests to become citizen scientists by taking consistent coastline photos to help researchers monitor shoreline erosion and changes over time and in response to storm events. This data can be used to inform conservation efforts, aid in natural disaster response, and inform coastal management decisions.

Welcomed hundreds of guests to Eclipse viewing events at Holiday Beach and John R. Park Homestead Conservation Areas.

Implemented capital facility construction of roads and parking lots at Collavino Conservation Area in advance of opening this site to the public.

Streamlined tree purchases through the ERCA website to improve customer service and workflow, resulting in administrative efficiency, real-time inventory and upgraded customer experience.

Upgraded our central workshop with new siding and insulation to reduce our energy consumption.

Expanded parking and hard surfaces at Maidstone Conservation Area to meet increased visitor demand.

Improved the entrance to Devonwood Conservation Area with new lighting, entry and interpretive signage, benches for resting and accessibility, and parking stops, thanks to a generous donation from Caesars Windsor Cares.

Replaced a greenway bridge in Essex as part of our ongoing commitment to maintain trail infrastructure.





WATERSHED RESEARCH SERVICES

Watershed Research Services works to improve the health of local watercourses and ultimately, our Great Lakes, through research, monitoring, and engaging the agricultural community in Best Management Practices. Source Water Protection ensures local sources of drinking water are protected through the implementation of policies in the Source Protection Plan. Watershed Research Services have grown with the support of external grants, in response to the increasingly complex challenges of our unique watershed region.

2024 WATERSHED RESEARCH SERVICES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Monitored 37 surface water stations and 8 groundwater stations. Four surface water stations were monitored with appropriate frequency to calculate nutrient loads, which also includes measuring water level and flow.

Sampled and recorded freshwater mussels at 10 locations and fishes at 6 locations. This work was completed in partnership with the University of Windsor and Caldwell First Nation.

Implemented 103 agricultural Best Management Practices in partnership with 21 landowners. Projects included are those that were funded in the 2024 calendar year. This includes 3025 acres of cover crop planted on 56 fields over the winter; and 566 acres of strip tillage on 11 fields and 1788 acres of cover crop planted on 36 fields in the fall of 2024. All of these projects were funded by Federal grants to ERCA.

Completed the evaluation of Source Water Protection policies to align with the current Technical Rules of the Clean Water Act to address new types of Significant Drinking Water Threats and/or changes to applicable vulnerable areas. Completed initial Early Engagement consultation with the MECP to review policy changes.

Initiated the four-year Essex Region Nutrient Reduction Program to reduce nutrients loadings across the region, in partnership with agricultural landowners and with funding support from the Government of Canada.





COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH SERVICES

Communications and outreach services support all business units of the Authority. Since 1973, it has worked to engage watershed residents through a variety of channels, including circulating flood messaging, disseminating natural hazard information, engaging landowners in conservation practices, educating students of all ages about environmental sustainability, engaging community members in tree planting and restoration, connecting people to nature through a variety of programs and events, and communicating broadly with stakeholder groups and watershed residents.

2024 COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH SERVICES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Inspired 7254 future conservationists and eco-stewards through conservation education programs.

Engaged 1127 volunteers to plant 2872 trees and 200 wetland and prairie plugs, and removed 1479 lbs of garbage from our watersheds. This included 500 trees planted along the Chrysler Canada Greenway with funding support from ADM Cares, Tree Canada and Skyline Group of Companies, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, and Viking Pump

Expanded the Greenway Guardians program to include 10 groups which adopted 37.5km of greenway trail, undertaking cleanup activities three times annually.

Supported the Essex Region Conservation Foundation in raising nearly \$600,000 for conservation projects, programs and initiatives.





CORPORATE SERVICES

Corporate Services ensures compliance with multiple pieces of legislation, provides support for and a common linkage between functions within the Authority, facilitates beneficial government relations, and manages the overall strategic direction and financial condition of the Authority, in conjunction with the Board of Directors. This is accomplished primarily through four program areas: Administration & Governance; Financial Services; Human Resources; and Information Management/Technology. Corporate Services is responsible for upholding transparency, accountability and legislative compliance through the production of key documents and reports, including budgets and audited financial statements.

2024 CORPORATE SERVICES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Negotiated a four-year Collective Agreement with the CUPE Local 3784 to December 31, 2027.

Supported the Essex Region Conservation Foundation in successfully updating its Administrative By-laws and other related governance documents to achieve compliance with the Ontario Not-For-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA).

Updated and implemented corporate policies such as ERCA's Land Acquisition & Disposition Policy, employment policies such as ERCA's Information Technology Systems and Services Acceptable Use, Electronic Monitoring, Remote Work and other mandatory policy revisions.

Improved ERCA's cybersecurity posture to identify, respond to and recover from security threats and risks by nearly 40%.

Updated and implemented industry standards for security practices.

Completed the physical fiber network cabling infrastructure for JRPH to extend WiFi to all principal buildings, enhancing the visitor experience and venue rental opportunities.



ERCA Accountability

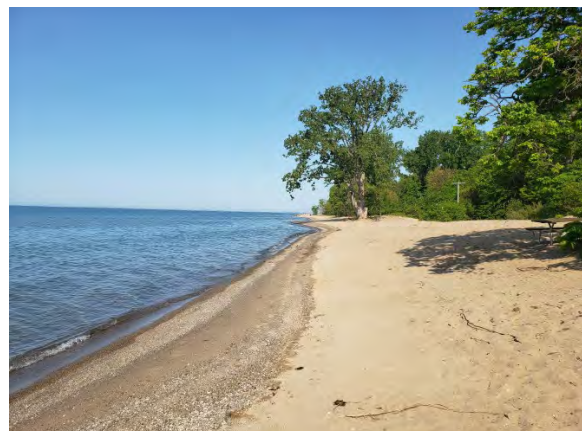
The following provides a three-year ‘by-the-numbers’ comparison of achievements.

Watershed Management Services

Area		2022	2023	2024
Permits Requested		901	827	779
Permits Issued		846	731	678
Clearances Issued		122	150	71
Request for Information Letters Issued		342	295	331
Development Inquires		1258	950	1230
Permits to Take Water Applications		2	0	2
Planning Services - transactions per year		732	646	778
Appeals		17	25	11
Appeals in CA Favour		17	25	11
Violations Issued		6	16	27
Average Response Time for Permits (days)	Minor Development	15	9	8
	Major Development	14	11	10
	Alteration to Waterways	8	7	3
Kilometres of Watercourses with Floodplain Mapping Completed		609	609	609
Hectares (area) digitally mapped delineating the CA Regulation Limit		38,304	38,304	38,304
Hectares (area) digitally mapped delineating the flooding hazard limit (flood plains)		30,384	30,384	30,3084
Flood Messages	Conditions Statements	15 messages	11 messages	13 Messages
	Flood Watches	2 messages	3 messages	3 messages
	Flood Warnings	0 messages	2 messages	1 message

Conservation Services

Area	2022	2023	2024
Total Landholdings (Hectares)	1,623.4	1,822.8	1824.0
Hectares of recreational land owned and managed	1,056.8	1,056.8	1368.0
Total hectares under forest management plans	44.39	44.39	44.39
Total Taxes for CA Landholdings	\$86,065	\$118,489	\$125,345
Land Acquisition in Reporting Year (in acres)	463	0	0
Value of acquisitions (Fair Market Value)	\$3,050,000	0	0
Total Acres of Habitat Restored	107.25	82.75	105.5
Number and Acres of Trees	89,377 84 acres	79,477 80 acres	60,872 54 Acres
Number and Acres of Wetlands	7 projects 3.5 acres	1 project 0.75 acres	3 projects 42 acres
Hectolitres of native tree seed collected		9	8
Acres of Prairie Habitat created	20	1.5	11.5
Number of landowners involved in restoration	198	195	213
Kilometres of Trails owned, managed & developed	99	99	99
Day Use Visitors to JRPH (estimated)	15,000	14,401	15,110
Day Use Visitors to HBCA (estimated)	22,000	24,630	23,000
Number of seasonal campsites purchased	72	72	75
Number of seasonal passes purchased	272	372	375



Watershed Research Services

Area		2022	2023	2024
Water Quality Improvement Projects Implemented	Agriculture/Other (total)	63	66	103
	Detroit River Watersheds	14	12	18
	Lake Erie Watersheds	33	13	62
	Lake St. Clair Watersheds	16	21	23
Number of landowners participating		29	36	21
Number of surface water quality monitoring stations		38	25	37
Number of ground water quality monitoring stations		8	8	8
Number of research studies with ERCA involvement		10	7	0
Number of freshwater mussel sampling stations		0	0	10
Number of fish sampling stations		0	0	6



Communications & Outreach Services

Area	2022	2023	2024
Number of volunteer participants	1,553	2,135	1215
Number of outreach events	29	30	27
Number of schoolyard naturalization projects	5	0	0
Trees planted by volunteers	3,391	2,710	2,872
Native plants planted by volunteers	195	385	200
Litter removed by volunteers		1,278lbs	1,479lbs
KM of Greenway adopted by Greenway Guardians		25	37.5
ERCA hosted special events	18	44	46
Number of schools participating in education programs	72	72	124
Number of unique education programs	229	228	297
Number of student participants	6,422	5,825	7254
Number of public meetings/workshops	26	14	14
Number of unique visitors to our website	92,539	115,835	60,098
Number of Facebook followers	5,408	5,754	5,964
Number of Twitter followers	3,651	3,641	3,593
Number of Instagram followers	1,950	2,136	2,287
Number of YouTube video views	2,193 views 200 hours	4,028 views 156.2 hours	2,397 views 92 hours

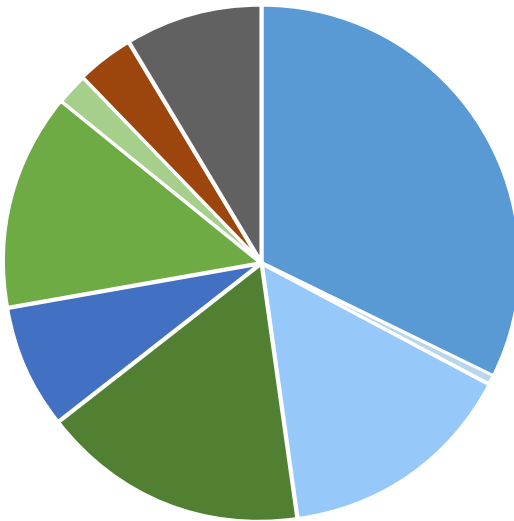
Corporate Services

Area	2022	2023	2024
Area of CA Jurisdiction	1,681.3 km2	1,681.3 km2	1,681.3 km2
Watershed Population	327,543	317,761	317,481
Staff—Permanent and Long-Term Contract	39	36	42
Staff—Special Grant and Short-Term Full-Time Equivalent Contract	5.22	6.6	7.38
Average Full Time Staff Length of Service	9.44	10.3	8.33

2024 Financial Review

Projected Funding by Source

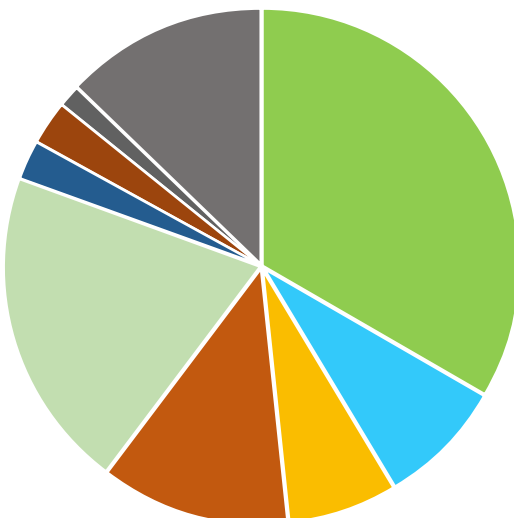
\$11.7M



Municipal Levies	\$3,425,850
Self-generated Revenues	\$1,577,009
Federal Grants	\$1,767,218
Internal Recoveries/Dept Chargebacks	\$903,780
ERCF & Other Grants	\$838,513
Provincial Special Project Grants	\$1,426,188
Interest, Inkind & Other	\$384,650
Provincial Transfer Payments (S.39 & DWSP)	\$214,317
Municipal Special Projects and Service Agreements	\$72,000

Projected Use of Funds by Function

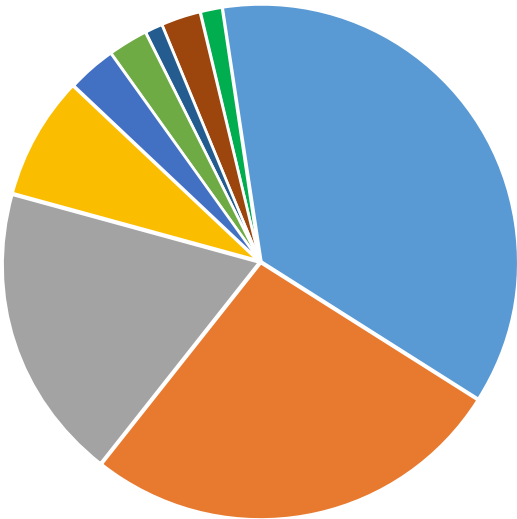
\$11.7M



Conservation Programs & Services	\$3,934,855
Watershed Management Programs & Services	\$1,495,840
Corporate & Shared Support Services	\$1,417,200
Community Outreach Programs & Services	\$803,590
Transfer to Reserves	\$315,500
Watershed Research Programs & Services	\$947,250
Capital Projects	\$2,353,127
Projected Surplus for Future Years/Reserves	\$157,500
Transfer to 2025 Projects	\$308,205

Projected Use of Funds by Classification

\$11.7M



Compensation	\$4,242,585
Construction & Engineering Contracts	\$3,143,939
Supplies, Materials & Contracted Services	\$2,190,021
Internal chargebacks & recoveries	\$892,525
Rent, Taxes & Utilities	\$386,628
Net Transfers to Reserves	\$315,500
Insurance, Audit, Legal & Prof Svcs	\$264,370
Projected Unrestricted Surplus for Future Years	\$157,829
Vehicle/Equip't Replacement	\$140,000



ERCA Board

Jim Morrison, City of Windsor - Chair

Sue Desjarlais, Town of LaSalle - Vice Chair

Molly Allaire, Town of Amherstburg

Peter Courtney, Town of Amherstburg

Katie McGuire-Blais, Town of Essex

Jason Matyi, Town of Essex

Dennis Rogers, Town of Kingsville

Thomas Neufeld, Town of Kingsville

Tracey Bailey, Municipality of Lakeshore

Ryan McNamara, Municipality of Lakeshore

Michael Akpata, Town of LaSalle

Anthony Abraham, Municipality of Leamington

Larry Verbeke, Municipality of Leamington

Dayne Malloch, Township of Pelee

Joe Bachetti, Town of Tecumseh

Tania Jobin, Town of Tecumseh

Angelo Marignani, City of Windsor

Kieran McKenzie, City of Windsor

Mark McKenzie, City of Windsor



ERCA Staff

Tim Byrne

Chief Administrative Officer / Secretary Treasurer

Corporate Services

Shelley McMullen	Chief Financial Officer / Director, Finance & Corporate Services
Tom Dufour	Geomatics Technician
Lori Jacobs	Payroll & Accounting Specialist
Nicole Kupnicki	Manager, Human Resources & Council Services
Lisa Limarzi	Administrative Associate: Corporate Services
Ryan Rossman	Director, Information Technology Services
Nancy Roy	Accounting Associate
Bryan Schmidt	Application Support Technician

Watershed Management Services

James Bryant	Director, Watershed Management Services
Lina Florian	Watershed Engineer
Ashley Gyori	Regulations Analyst
Dan Jenner	Regulations Coordinator
Summer Locknick	Regulations Technician
Tian Martin	Water Resources Engineer
Lindsay Swackhammer	Administrative Associate: Watershed Management
Sydney Richmond	Regulations Analyst
Alicia Good	Resource Planner
Adrian Enache	Engineering Technologist

Conservation Services

Kevin Money	Director, Conservation Services
Emma Arnew	Watershed Stewardship Technician (SGE)
Kathryn Arthur	Restoration Biologist
Tim Baxter (LOA)	Conservation Area Technician
Dawn Ferron	Water Quality Technician (SGE)
Paul Giroux	Forester
Jenny Gharib	Special Projects Technical Assistant (SGE)
Holly Iles	Conservation Area Technician (Contract)
Russ Jones	Conservation Area Technician
Justin Landry	Water Quality Technician (SGE)
Nathan McDonald	Senior Conservation Area Technician, HBCA
Jordan Messina	Conservation Area Technician (Contract)
Laura Monforton (LOA)	Conservation Area Technician
Bevin Martin	Senior Conservation Area Technician
Jacqueline Serran	Detroit River Remedial Action Plan Coordinator (SGE)
Katie Stammler	Water Quality Scientist / Project Manager, Source Water Protection
William Tate	Superintendent, Field Operations
Amy Weinz	Water Quality Technical Specialist (SGE)

Communications & Outreach Services

Danielle Breault Stuebing	Director, Communications & Outreach Services
Kris Ives	Curator / Education Coordinator
Krysten Burns	Bilingual Interpreter
Gina Pannunzio	Community Outreach Coordinator
Jessica Rose	Environmental Educator
Emily Lockhart	Interpreter
Jay Santarossa	Multimedia Specialist



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