

2013



**Lower Thames Valley
Conservation Authority**

ANNUAL REPORT



Brian W. King

Brian King
Chair LTVCA

Message from the Chair

2013 was a year of new beginnings, highlighted with many accomplishments and challenges. Under the direction of our new General Manager, the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority is adopting innovative and exciting new approaches to watershed management.

I am proud to share this report, which captures a glimpse of our work over the past year, made possible through solid community, and government partnerships, hundreds of volunteer hours, and a core of experienced staff dedicated to program delivery. Now more than ever, it is imperative to work together to protect and restore our watershed's natural resources, and meet the challenges presented as a result of climate change with sound stewardship practices.

We are fortunate to have the expertise to offer services which best serve our local communities. All programs increased in activity, including plan review, forestry, habitat restoration, education, recreation and community outreach. Flood control, water monitoring, and drinking water source protection exemplify our efforts to manage and protect our precious water resources.

Work will continue with these and new programs to promote and achieve greater watershed stewardship and environmental protection for now and into the future.

I recognize and thank the Directors of our Board and Committees for their ongoing commitment and meeting contributions, as their support and knowledge reaches beyond political boundaries, benefiting the entire Lower Thames region. Our 10 member municipalities have certainly had their needs and concerns well represented. In addition, the assistance from the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Foundation continues to be greatly appreciated.

"The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority is a watershed-based partner, working with the local community, providing services and information to efficiently protect and enhance the environment for present and future generations." As stated in our vision, collaborative efforts and wise decisions made today, will indeed benefit many generations to come – creating a healthy watershed for all who live in and visit the lower Thames region.



Don Pearson

Don Pearson
General Manager LTVCA

General Manager's Remarks

Reflecting on the past twelve months as General Manager of the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority I am struck by the extent of the geography, people and enterprises that are influenced by, and in turn influence, the Thames River and its tributaries. It is a constant, but changing factor in our daily lives yet it is taken for granted by most, except during those occasions when it threatens to breach its banks and spill into our residential neighbourhoods and our farms.

Fortunately, through the foresight, diligence and planning of our civic and provincial leaders over many decades, the Thames only rarely exceeds its normal boundaries and while the potential for flood damage still exists, it is a fraction of what would be experienced were it not for the infrastructure that has been in place for more than six decades. From dams and reservoirs in the upper part of the watershed to the massive dykes west of Chatham, and the dams and diversion channel in Chatham itself, literally

tens of millions of dollars have been invested in protecting our flood vulnerable lands in this watershed alone.

In the past year, on no fewer than five occasions, this investment has paid dividends in avoided damage as an endless parade of major rainstorms, combined on several instances with rapid snowmelt, impacted the Thames watershed. For most of the more than 600,000 residents of the entire Thames River basin, with apologies to many farmers in Chatham-Kent and elsewhere who had way more than enough rainfall, this extreme weather produced nothing remarkable. We can't afford to be complacent however, as nature has a way of demonstrating that it is capable of some surprises. Through the efforts and diligence of the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority, its 10 member municipalities and its 35 sibling agencies through Ontario, our province is relatively free from flood related disasters such as were witnessed in Alberta this past summer.

OUR VISION

Our Vision ~ Protect and Enhance the Environment

Our Objectives are:

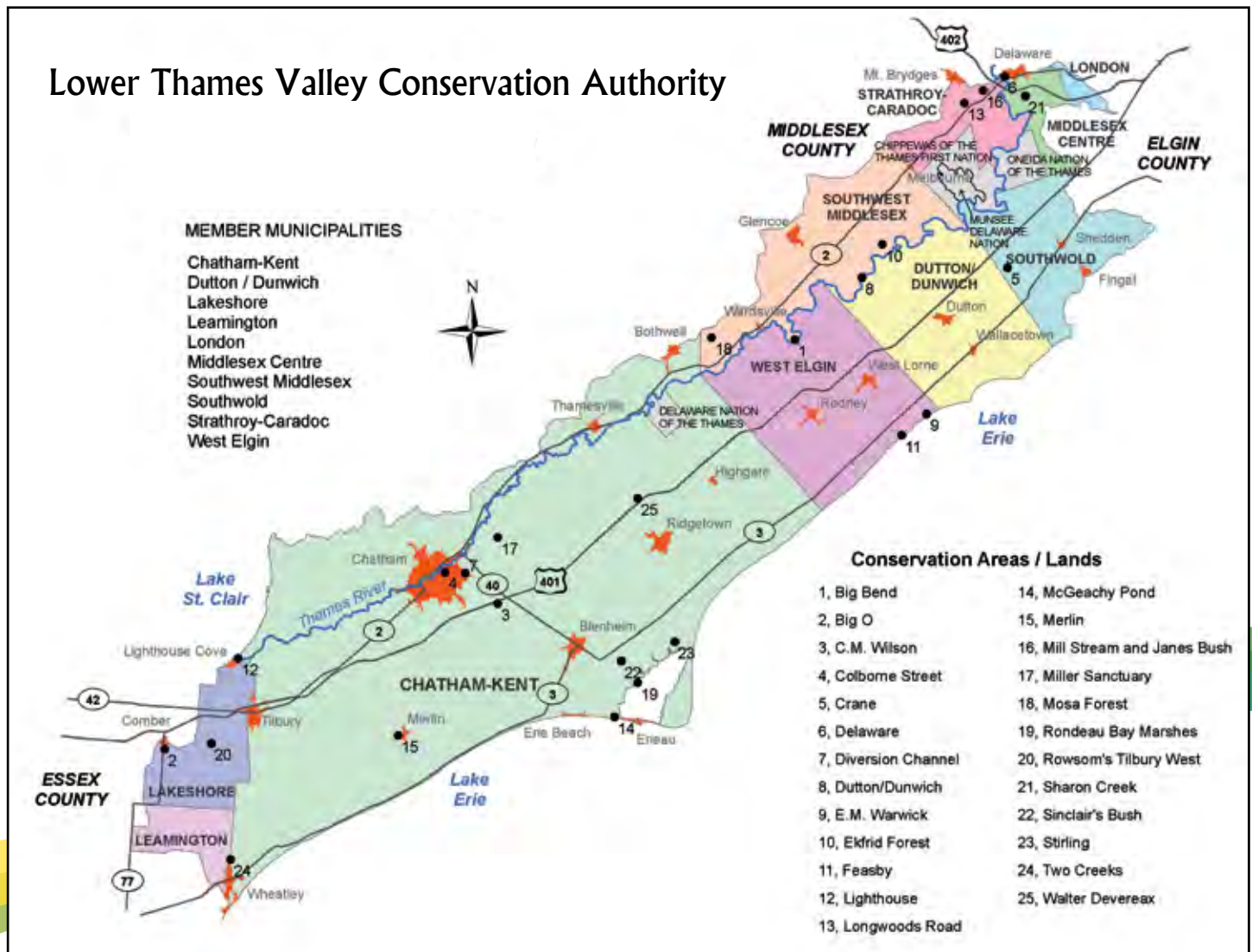
- Protecting Life & Property
- Protecting & Restoring Habitat
- Research & Monitoring
- Providing Opportunities to Enjoy, Learn & Respect
- Partnering with the Local Community



"The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority (LTVCA) is a watershed-based partner, working with the local community, providing services and information to efficiently protect and enhance the environment for present and future generations."

The LTVCA is one of 36 Conservation Authorities in the Province of Ontario. Member of Conservation Ontario.

Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority



Area of jurisdiction lies over the watersheds of all streams, which drain into the Thames River from the Village of Delaware, to Lake St. Clair. Southern boundary has jurisdiction over the watersheds of all streams which drain into Lake Erie, from the Talbot Creek watershed in the east, to the Two Creeks watershed in the west. Total area covers over 3,275 square kilometres (1,264 square miles) in southwestern Ontario and is home to over 120,000 people.

DIRECTORY

Board & Staff Directory

LTVCA Directors

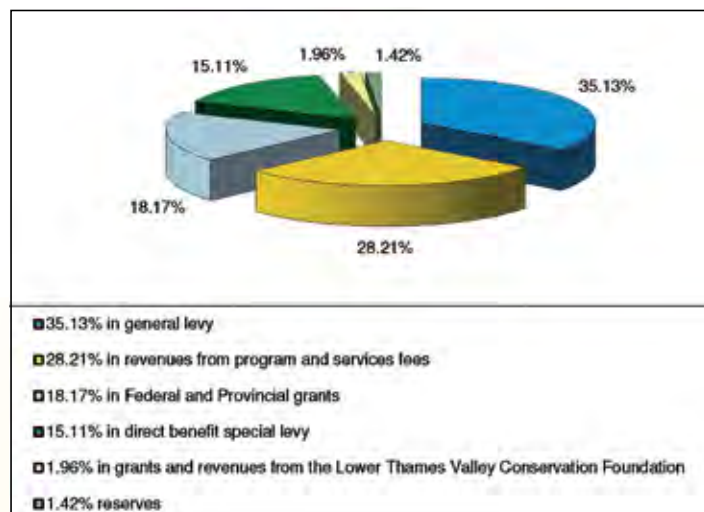
Brian King (Chair) - Municipality of Chatham-Kent
John Kavelaars (Vice-Chair) - Municipality of Southwest Middlesex
Michael Bondy - Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Stanley Caveney - City of London
Ron Doane - Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc
Ian Fleck - Municipality of Dutton / Dunwich
Grant Jones - Township of Southwold
Linda McKinlay - Town of Lakeshore
Norm Miller - Municipality of West Elgin
Steve Pinsonneault - Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Albert Bannister - Municipality of Middlesex Centre
Charlie Wright - Municipality of Leamington

Ska-Nah-Doht Village Advisory Committee

Don Fairbairn - Chair
Ron Watts - Vice-chair
Brian King, John Kavelaars, Ron Doane, Stan Caveney, Ian Fleck, Andy Chisholm, Glenn Stott, Stan Lidster, Conrad Wodrich, Darcy Fallon, Don Pearson

Budget

Don Pearson - General Manager / Secretary-Treasurer, directed the administration and financial aspects of the LTVCA, with support from the Accounting Clerks - Sharlet Piggott and Sandy Maynard.



The LTVCA's budget of \$2,110,916 received approval in February.

Full-time Staff

Don Pearson - General Manager / Secretary-Treasurer
Bonnie Carey - Community Relations Coordinator
Bruce Clark - Construction & Maintenance Technician
Jerry DeZwart - Conservation Education Technician
Russ Dysarz - Western District Supervisor
David Little - Eastern District Supervisor
Karen Mattila - Ska-Nah-Doht Village & Museum Curator
Sandy Maynard - Accounting Clerk
Rose Nicholas - Ska-Nah-Doht Village Education Technician
Sharlet Piggott - Accounting Clerk
Jessica Schnaithmann - Regulation & Planning Technician
Valerie Towsley - Resource Technician
Greg VanEvery - Environmental Technical Assistant
Randall VanWagner - Environmental Project Coordinator
Agnes Vriends - Clerk / Secretary
Jason Wintermute - Water Management Supervisor

Chris Tasker - Source Protection Manager of the Thames, Sydenham & Region Source Protection Region

LTVCA Contract Staff

Brian Armstrong - Gatehouse / Security
Emily Armstrong - Assistant Water Resource Technician
Dylan Boersma - Community Activities Assistant
Brian Boland - Security
Amanda Bossy - Community Trees Initiative Coordinator
Jovana Burz - GIS / Database Technician
Julia Castrogiovanni - Community Activities Assistant
Carol Crone - Gatehouse
Crystal Crone - Gatehouse
Devon Hennessy - Public Programming Assistant
Kelly Johnson - Community Trees Initiative Coordinator
Cody Kish - Gatehouse / Education Technician
Michael Latham - General Labourer
Buddy Morrison - General Labourer / Security
Gary Reissner - General Labourer
Derekica Snake - Education Technician
Blake Sykes - General Labourer / Security
Carl Thompson - Tree Planter
Brooke Williams - Gatehouse
Emma Young - Community Activities Coordinator
Kyla Zielbauer - GIS Assistant



The Thames River celebrated its thirteenth year as a Canadian Heritage River. Thousands of volunteers cleaned up hundreds of kilometres along the river during the fourteenth Annual Thames River Clean-up in April.

PROTECT LIFE & PROPERTY

Water Management

The water management and technical services program provides science-based support for land and water resources management, including natural heritage programs, as well as technical expertise to forecast, control and monitor floods and erosion to protect life and property. Jason Wintermute is the Water Management Supervisor.

Flood Control

The Lower Thames watershed experienced a wet year. There were four events on the Thames River where flows reached 350 cubic metres per second (m³/s) flooding the river flats upstream of Chatham, leading to 15 advisories being issued by the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority (LTVCA). One event from April 10th to 18th required the operation of the 6th Street Backwater Dam and Pumping Station at the mouth of McGregor Creek in Chatham. Rainfall amounts of up to 80 mm over four days led to peak flows of 480 m³/s at the Dutton gauge on the 12th, 570 m³/s at the Thamesville gauge on the 14th, and a peak water level elevation of 178.70 metres above sea level in Chatham on the 13th. The dam was closed and pumping operations lasted from the 12th to the 16th. This event caused flooding to parks and low-lying areas adjacent to the river within the Chatham urban area. Merchants along King Street reported no basement flooding. During another event on March 11th to 19th, water levels came within 30 cm of operating the 6th Street Dam. The other two events occurred in January.



The 6th Street Backwater Dam and Pumping Station at the mouth of McGregor Creek in Chatham, operated during the mid-April flood.

There were also five events where flows in McGregor Creek were sufficiently large to require the closing of the Rivard Dam to divert flows down the Diversion Channel, protecting the flood prone areas along the Indian and McGregor Creeks system in Chatham. These events occurred in January, March, April,

July and December. Four additional advisories were issued to cover these events. A series of thunderstorm events in July overwhelmed the local drainage system in the former Dover Township, leading to the LTVCA issuing a Safety Bulletin for the area and the mobilization of some Conservation Authority owned pumps.



In September, the committee which allocates provincial funding for the Water Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) program toured the LTVCA's flood infrastructure: Sharon Dam, the 6th Street Backwater Dam, Rivard Dam, Diversion Channel and dykes along the Thames River downstream of Chatham. A dyke study west of Prairie Siding was approved for \$9,500.

Provincial Grant Funding for Capital Maintenance & Flood Forecasting

The LTVCA receives annual funding from the province for operation, routine minor and preventative maintenance of flood and erosion control projects, flood forecasting and warning, chronic ice management, legal costs for ongoing joint LTVCA / Provincial capital projects, watershed management and related administration.

Great Lakes Levels

Lake St. Clair water levels began 35 cm below long-term normals for January. Levels followed the normal seasonal trends, rising until July, reaching 10 cm below the long-term normal and tracking there until year-end. **Lake Erie** water levels began 20 cm below the long-term normal for January. Levels followed the normal seasonal trends, rising until July, reaching 5 cm above the long-term normal and 5 cm below the long-term normal at year end. One advisory was issued on October 31 for Lake Erie communities of Erie Shores Drive, Erie Beach and Erieau. High winds up to 70 km/hr had potential to create storm surge waves in excess of 2.5 m height causing flooding and erosion. No damage was reported to the LTVCA.

PROTECT LIFE & PROPERTY

Provincial Water Monitoring

The LTVCA works with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment on the Provincial Groundwater and the Provincial (Stream) Water Quality Monitoring Programs. Such programs assist in environmental reporting, decision-making, and program implementation by the Conservation Authority, member municipalities and the province.

Groundwater monitoring is conducted at 10 wells throughout the watershed with the use of water level loggers and supplemental rain and barometric pressure loggers. Nine wells are sampled every fall for water quality. The LTVCA maintains the instrumentation, samples the wells, and conducts data corrections. Stream water quality sampling is conducted at 11 locations throughout the watershed.

The Conservation Authority samples monthly in the spring, summer and fall for general water chemistry. Since biological analyses are not part of the provincial program, the LTVCA tests for e-coli at the same sites. Currently, the program is supplemented with pesticide monitoring at three sites.

Ontario Low Water Response Program

The LTVCA participates in a provincial program that monitors watershed conditions to determine if the area is in a low water situation. It was wet enough during the year that Low Water Conditions did not need to be declared and the committee was not required to meet, although the local Water Response Team was active in 2012.

Thames River Clearwater Revival

This multi-year endeavour focuses on the completion of a watershed strategy, for which an updated water management plan is a priority. Partners include Environment Canada, First Nations communities, provincial ministries, the Upper Thames River and Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authorities and the City of London.

The LTVCA provides membership on the Steering and Technical Committees and the Communications Working Group, supplying data, technical advice, and peer review. The Terms of Reference is signed and work now begins, with a focus on water quality.

Land Use Planning & Regulations

Municipal Plan Input & Review Under the Conservation Authorities Act

Plan input and review is one of the ways the LTVCA monitors development and achieves its objectives. The input the Conservation Authority has on new development near or in natural hazard areas like flood plains and steep slopes, ensures identification of potential hazards before complications arise. Valerie Towsley, Jason Wintermute and Jessica Schnaithmann are the LTVCA staff responsible for administering the land use planning and regulations program.

Official Plans											2
Official Plan Amendments	6	1			4			1			
Comprehensive Zoning Bylaws											
Zoning Bylaw Amendments	66	10	5	1	5	1	9	1	6	18	
Severances	82	10	1	2			8	2	5	12	
Minor Variances	22	5			1		1	2	3	1	
Plans of Subdivision	4	1					1		1		
Property Clearances	31	5	3			1	3		1	2	
Drainage Reports & Maintenance	71	23	18	2		1	10	4		14	
General Property Inquiries	587	33	83	4	2	12	28	20	15	78	
TOTAL SERVICES PER MUNICIPALITY	869	88	108	9	12	15	60	30	31	125	2
SERVICES											
MUNICIPALITY	Chatham-Kent	Dufferin-Cornwall	Lakeshore	Leamington	London	Middlesex Centre	Southwest Middlesex	Southwold	Strathroy-Caradoc	West Elgin	Counties

The land use planning and regulations program provides environmental planning expertise to guide municipal and other land-use planning decisions on a watershed basis, consistent with current applicable Federal and Provincial legislation and policies, and Conservation Authority and municipal planning policy. Left are the municipal plan reviews summaries for the year.

Elgin County Shoreline Study

The Conservation Authorities of Elgin County have formed a collaborative with the County and the Municipalities of Dutton/Dunwich, West Elgin, Central Elgin and Bayham, and the Townships of Southwold and Malahide. The plan will incorporate current mapping and technical standards for flooding, wave uprush, erosion and dynamic beaches. It will examine the hazards and protection along the shoreline, providing recommendations for sustainable development of the shoreline ecosystems and land uses. The study process will proceed in 2014. A steering committee of representatives of each municipality and Conservation Authority will manage the project, and it will be administered through the Kettle Creek Conservation Authority.

Conservation Authority / Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Agreement

Jointly reviewed were 161 applications under the LTVCA / DFO agreement, with 20 applications submitted by private landowners to undertake work in watercourses and shoreline properties, 43 as engineer reports and 98 as drain maintenance notifications. By November 25, the DFO agreement had lapsed, with a new Memorandum of Understanding expected in early 2014.



It was the 16th year of an agreement between the Conservation Authority and the DFO, for the review of proposed works adjacent to water (lakes, rivers, streams and drains), to assess and identify impacts to fish habitat.



An Elgin County Shoreline Management Plan for the coastal zone of Lake Erie will provide additional, consistent land use planning and more accurate investigation into the dynamics of the entire shoreline, rather than a sectional or watershed view.

Development, Interference with Wetlands & Alterations to Shorelines & Watercourses Regulation

The LTVCA reviewed 258 applications under the Regulation, an increase of 92 permits from 2012. Landowners submitted 101 applications, six were habitat applications, five were for wind turbine access culverts, five were from Union Gas for directional drills and 141 were for engineer reports and maintenance work on municipal drains. Five applications went before the hearing board of the Executive Committee. Four were approved with conditions, and one denied.

Drainage Superintendents Association of Ontario

The LTVCA is a long-standing associate member of the Chatham-Kent-Essex Chapter of the Drainage Superintendents Association of Ontario. As the Lower Thames watershed consists of highly drained agricultural lands and is managed under both the Drainage Act and the LTVCA's regulations, cooperation and good relationships with our region's Drainage Superintendents are extremely important.

PROTECT & RESTORE HABITAT

Tree Planting



In partnership with the community, the land, conservation and water stewardship services program provides opportunities to enjoy, learn and respect our environment through hands-on, local projects. These activities protect and restore species and habitats, encourage a sense of ownership of environmental rehabilitation efforts, and protect our source water resources now and in the future.

Tree Planting Program

The LTVCA assisted landowners in planting 57,840 trees, establishing 33.5 hectares of new forest plantation; the largest of these being three and one-half hectares in area. Belonging to a landowner in the Rondeau Bay watershed, this plantation is ideal for establishing a corridor linkage and providing source water protection.

Forestry Grant Programs

The cost to plant one hectare of trees is approximately \$4,446, and incentives of \$81,000 were provided to landowners to reduce this financial burden. Trees Ontario, Ontario Power Generation, Union Gas, Stewardship Kent, GDF Suez and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food supported the program. Project funding was also provided by TD Green Streets Program (\$15,000) and Hydro One (\$5,000) to enable roadside tree plantings in Chatham-Kent.

Chatham-Kent Greening Strategy

Through strategic planning, the Municipality of Chatham-Kent recognized that a greening effort was needed to address environmental concerns. A partnership developed with the LTVCA for municipal funding to support two forestry positions located at the Conservation Authority office - Randall Van Wagner and Greg Van Every. Here, staff apply for tree planting grants for wetland creation and tallgrass prairie projects in an effort to educate, restore and build awareness about the importance of a healthy environment. Since 2007, the municipal funding has leveraged an additional \$1.8 million dollars to be spent on Chatham-Kent greening initiatives.

Community Trees Initiative Program

The Community Trees Initiative (CTI), based on the Ontario Science curriculum, engages groups in field events, which develop stewardship ethics, and teach proper techniques to collect, stratify and propagate seeds from tree and prairie species. With Coordinator Amanda Bossy, spring participants included 17 secondary and 20 elementary school groups, four community groups, and three other groups. Two schools created butterfly gardens. Staff involved 699 volunteers in 44 events.

In the fall, Kelly Johnson was hired as the new Coordinator to work with the Chatham-Kent Health Unit and schools on the 'Tomorrow's Greener Schools...Today' project. Seventy trees were planted at nine schools. Two seed collection and two planting events, two seed cleaning workshops, one facilities clean up and three CTI presentations were offered.



The CTI program delivers in-class lessons, introducing students to and developing students' knowledge of environmental issues.

Restoration and Stewardship

Conservation Action Plans (CAPs)

In partnership with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent and Carolinian Canada, Conservation Action Plans (CAPs) have been developed for Lake St. Clair and Rondeau Bay coastal zones. Staff assisted with workshops which were organized on behalf of other agencies, interest groups, and individuals, enabling their contribution to these plans. CAPs will guide the future direction of restoration activities in these two, threatened “hot spots of biodiversity”. These areas now have the ability to rebound through collaborative, community action.

Conservation Area Habitat Restoration

At **Rowsom's Tilbury West Conservation Area**, an agri – drain was successfully installed, elevating the water in the oxbow of Rowsom's woods. Four ponds were excavated in natural depressions in the forest. In addition, a pond was created on the west side of the woodlot in the open area, now naturally regenerating. Excavated soil was immediately seeded for erosion. Currently, all ponds have collected surface water and are attracting wildlife.

A .4 hectare prairie has been established at the south end of **Merlin Conservation Area**. The site was treated with herbicide, and tilled in preparation. Seeds were then broadcast and prairie plugs planted.

A hibernaculum was created at the terminus of the trail extension created this year at **Big 'O' Conservation Area**. Along this trail, various wetland and forest understory plants were also planted.



*Two ponds were excavated to create a wetland complex at the **Diversion Channel Conservation Area**. Tree and wetland plant species were planted, and phragmites control was undertaken.*



*The **Greening Partnership Environmental Award** applauds environmental achievements in Chatham-Kent. Gary Rodger and Andrew McLeod received this award, having restored over 16 hectares of land.*

Conservation Scholarships and Awards

LTVCA continued to support a variety of local scholarships and awards including a 26-year commitment to the Ridgetown Campus of the University of Guelph's environmental program. This \$500 award is directed to the **Academic Proficiency, Environmental Management** diploma program and is given to the student with the highest academic standing. Luc Johnston was presented the award by LTVCA staff Jason Wintermute.

The Kent Soil and Crop Improvement Association held their annual meeting in February, where brothers Bill and Earl Elgie earned the **Outstanding Farmer of the Year Award**. They were recognized for their lifelong commitment to conserving soil, and improving the environment around their farm.

Elgin Clean Water Project

The Elgin Clean Water Project (ECWP) is a cooperative, grant program between the Catfish Creek, Kettle Creek, Long Point Region and Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authorities. ECWP assists landowners with projects which improve and protect water quality in Elgin County. Landowners undertake stewardship practices to benefit the entire County and beyond. Four landowners from the LTVCA watershed received funding for seven projects through the ECWP.

SOURCE PROTECTION

Thames, Sydenham & Region Source Protection Region

Drinking Water Source Protection

The purpose of the provincial Clean Water Act (CWA) (2006) is to protect existing and future sources of drinking water. Protecting water at the source - municipal wells and water intakes - is the first barrier in a multi-barrier approach to providing a safe, clean supply of water. The Act is part of the government's commitment to protecting and enhancing human health and the environment, while implementing the Walkerton Inquiry recommendations.

Water is critical to all aspects of our lives and it is important to ensure there is a safe and reliable source of water for all our uses - now and in the future. Our municipal drinking water comes from lakes, rivers, streams or underground sources (aquifers) located across the province. Protection of our watersheds and the Great Lakes should be a priority.

The Upper Thames River, Lower Thames Valley and St. Clair Region Conservation Authorities partnered together to form the Thames, Sydenham and Region Source Protection Region and are working with municipalities, stakeholders and the public to develop a Source Protection Plan to protect drinking water, while taking into account the needs of our communities.



Photo by Eileen Lewington

The Source Protection Committee is appointed under the Clean Water Act, 2006, representing municipal, business, general public and interest group sectors in the region. The Committee is responsible for guiding the development of the Source Protection Plan.



Highlights of the Year

The Proposed Source Protection Plan (PSPP) for the Thames, Sydenham and Region, was received by the Ontario Minister of the Environment in December of 2012. Revisions to the PSPP took place following the Province's review. Amendments were necessary prior to re submission to the Province, including updates to the Assessment Reports. Comments on the re submitted PSPP are expected in the spring of 2014. The Thames, Sydenham and Region Source Protection Plan will reach the approval stage in 2014.

Technical work involved assessing whether fuel spill related IPZ-3s on Lake St. Clair would be extended into the Lower Thames from areas assessed by the Essex Region Source Protection Authority. If approved, the delineations would extend upstream in the Thames River and its tributaries. Revisions may be necessary to the Source Protection Plan, as new, vulnerable areas with significant threats would require associated policies.

County based workshops were arranged for municipal implementers, with information about how the Source Protection Plan will affect municipalities, and whether or not to engage Risk Management Services and connections to Official Plans.

A workshop was held with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent. Chatham-Kent also appointed their Risk Management Official / Risk Management Inspector.

The CWA specifies a continued role for Conservation Authorities (CAs) in Drinking Water Source Protection. The CAs have been identified as implementers of specific policies and it is anticipated that the CA will be a resource for municipalities and other implementers.

Funding was released to municipalities by the Ministry of the Environment toward the end of the year to help them prepare for the implementation of Source Protection Plans. This included collaboration funding, whereby municipalities working together with four or more municipalities, would receive maximum funding. CAs in the region will coordinate a number of efforts, which will assist municipalities with maximizing their access to this funding. In the Thames, Sydenham and Region Source Protection Region, CAs will be responsible for leading a collaborative partnership with municipalities and the Province to support policies which use Education and Outreach.

Chris Tasker is the Source Protection Project Manager of the Thames, Sydenham & Region Source Protection Region.

ENJOY, LEARN & RESPECT

Conservation Lands

The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority has protected environmentally sensitive lands, wetlands, culturally unique features and significant biological, ecological, and scenic qualities through its conservation lands program. Nearly 690 ha of conservation land have been preserved at 25 properties for public use in the watershed and region. The LTVCA promotes its objectives through recreational and educational opportunities in the Conservation Areas - places to actively experience the natural world and increase environmental awareness through interpretive signage and special events.

Russ Dysarz and David Little - Western and Eastern District Supervisors respectively, and Bruce Clark - Construction and Maintenance Technician, are responsible for the maintenance of these sites. The LTVCA's Staff Safety Committee tour the conservation lands annually to assess the properties' safety for public use. In addition, it is one of the Conservation Authority's policies, to ensure conservation area facilities and programs are as accessible as possible, for everyone's enjoyment.

Conservation Area development and maintenance of facilities is enhanced by many, annual donations of money and volunteer time from local individuals, companies, conservation clubs and organizations. The LTVCA is grateful to all donors.

This year witnessed many improvements to our conservation areas. In the western half of the watershed, **Big "O"** had a new parking area constructed, along with new signage and trails. At **Merlin**, construction is underway to create a 1.5 km multi-use trail, complete with interpretive trail signage and a trailhead kiosk.

In the eastern conservation areas of the watershed, the removal of hazard trees, most of which were dead ash, was ongoing.

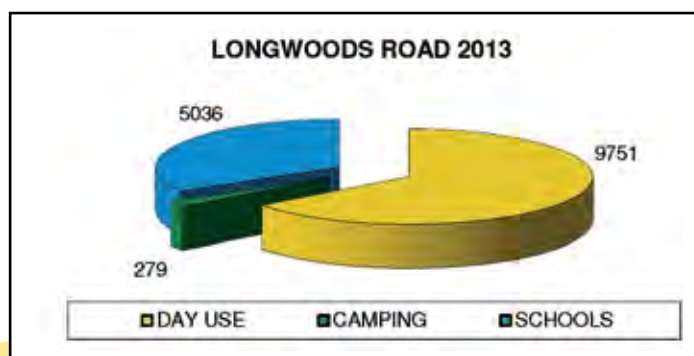


A "Friends of Rowsom" group was created to compliment the new wetlands, trails, signage and parking area upgrades at **Rowsom's Tilbury West** Conservation Area.

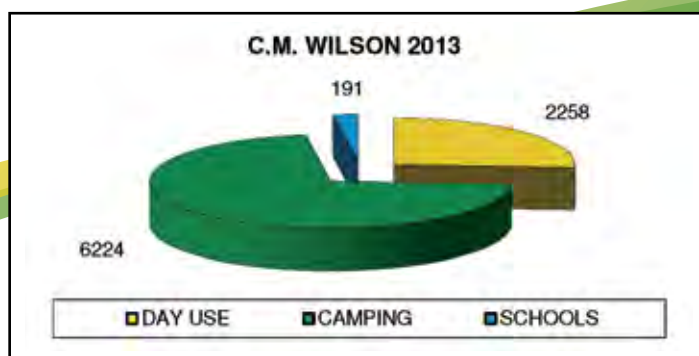
A tallgrass prairie prescribed burn and a bass transfer to **Springer Lake** were successfully undertaken at **Sharon Creek**. At **Longwoods Road**, construction of the Carey Carolinian Arboretum and Trail kiosk began and a new parking lot sign was installed. At **Big Bend**, the boat launch and roadways received extra maintenance.

Recorded Conservation Area Visitation

Not all of our conservation areas have recorded attendance figures, however the following annual statistics are available: Big Bend CA - camping 3,841 (2012 - 1,972), E.M. Warwick CA - camping 2,764 (2012 - 2,290). The charts below reflect the visitation at Longwoods Road and C.M. Wilson Conservation Areas.



Visitation 15,066 (2012 -12,857)



Visitation 8,673 (2012 -7,050)

ENJOY, LEARN & RESPECT

Conservation Education

The Conservation Education program provides Ontario Curriculum based, conservation area field trip and in class programs to students and community groups, fostering an understanding and appreciation of our renewable natural resources, thereby encouraging wise stewardship practices. Jerry DeZwart is the Conservation Education Technician.



The Protecting Our Drinking Water classroom program was delivered to 77 grades 8 and 11 students and 6 adults (three classes), funded by a RBC Bluewater grant. Students learned about human impact on the land and how this can affect the quality of our drinking water.

Community Conservation Workshops

The number of Scouts, Guides, Cubs, Brownies, Beavers, Sparks, Venturers and leaders participating in a workshops at Longwoods Road Conservation Area and outreach locations reached 252 (2012 - 156). Youth groups obtained different badges for various outdoor activities including Owl Hikes, Bird Watching, and World Conservation. Water Safety for Rural Students presentations were delivered to 132 students for the Chatham-Kent Farm Safety Day. At the Western Fair Wetlands Display in London, the importance of wetland ecosystems was imparted by LTVCA staff to 1,200 Thames Valley District School Board and London District Catholic School Board students.

Chatham-Kent & Lambton Childrens' Water Festival

This event was deferred to 2014 as Chatham-Kent hosted the celebration of the Bicentennial, specifically the recognition of the Battle of 1813 historical event in October.

School Programs

Field Trips

This year, 1,249 elementary and secondary students (2012 - 643) accompanied by 259 adult supervisors (2012 - 114), participated in field trips to Longwoods Road and C.M. Wilson Conservation Areas. Outdoor learning opportunities greatly enhanced student comprehension of curriculum concepts.

Classroom Programs

The River and Creek Safety Program was presented by LTVCA staff east of Chatham-Kent and by the Chatham-Kent Childrens' Safety Village within Chatham-Kent. In the municipalities of West-Elgin, Dutton/Dunwich, Southwest Middlesex, Middlesex Centre, Strathroy - Caradoc and Southwold, this March program was delivered to 252 grade two students - 14 classes (2012 - 274 - 14 classes). These service clubs are recognized for their ongoing support of this important safety program - Royal Canadian Legion Branch 598, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 251, Glencoe District Lions Club, Rodney Lions Club, Delaware Lions and Lioness Clubs, and Optimist Club of West Lorne.

The Biodiversity and You! Program was received by 13 grade six classes (320 students and 23 adults). Union Gas funded this program as a free resource, which provides educators with an introduction to biodiversity. The program is available on the LTVCA's website.

In addition, staff helped Fanshawe College's Recreation and Leisure Course students realize the outdoor educational and health related potential of conservation areas during a visit to Longwoods Road Conservation Area.



West Elgin Secondary School environmental students enjoyed an Alien Invasive Species partnership program. Students performed qualitative sampling and initiated removal of garlic mustard at Longwoods Road Conservation Area.



Ska-Nah-Doht Village & Museum

The Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum is a public facility for research, education and enjoyment; protecting, promoting and maintaining the heritage resources of the Lower Thames Valley Conservation

Authority and the collections of the museum for present and future generations.

Village Curator - Karen Mattila managed the \$237,206 Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum budget. Rose Nicholas - Village Education Technician, conducted programs and events, and oversaw the inventory for the Turtle Trail gift shop. Financial support is acknowledged from the Ministry of Culture, through the \$22,992 Community Museum Operating Grant. Ska-Nah-Doht is located in Longwoods Road Conservation Area.

Happy 40th Anniversary!

The 40th Anniversary of Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum was a milestone, which was promoted and celebrated throughout the year. Festivities culminated in October at the annual Tastes of Fall event. Dan Smoke, Mohawk Elder, was emcee. Ogitchitaw Kweog Singers and Drummers, and Sakoietta Singers and Dancers entertained. Staff Jerry DeZwart and friend Chris provided folk music throughout the event. The entertainment was financially supported by the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Foundation.



There were crafts, local artists, food sampling and cake enough for all 260 people attending the 40th Anniversary of Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum!



"Nightwalk with the Spirits" is a summer event not to be missed at Ska-Nah-Doht Village!

Special Events & Activities

The Village hosted Archaeology Day in July, Nightwalk with the Spirits in August and Tastes of Fall in October. All events were well attended. Longwoods and Ska-Nah-Doht sponsored "Scorched Earth", part of the Native Women's Quilt on the Middlesex Barn Quilt Tour. The quilt block sign is located at the park entrance.

Three students hired through a Young Canada Works in Heritage grant through the Canadian Museum Association, and a Canada Summer Jobs grant, helped promote the 40th Anniversary event in the community, and created two walking tours. The Ontario Stewardship Rangers also lent a hand with Ska-Nah-Doht Village maintenance in July.

School Programs

Ska-Nah-Doht's education programs attracted 3,493 students (2012 - 2,291) and 662 supervisors and parents (2012 - 405). In addition, 586 public tour and workshop participants (2012 - 535) enjoyed the facility.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Community Relations



Lynn Eves from the Bluewater Centre for Raptor Rehabilitation prepares to release a Screech Owl at the annual Longwoods Volunteer Appreciation Picnic in July. All eyes are on the owl!

Communications efforts enhance awareness and understanding of the goals and programs of the LTVCA for our target audiences, enabling them to support and enjoy our facilities and services. Through accurate, consistent and clear messaging, staff expand the range of the target audiences whenever possible. Bonnie Carey - Community Relations Coordinator is assisted by Agnes Vriend - Clerk - Secretary with many communications projects.

Community Relations activities inform our primary audiences - LTVCA Board and Committee members, Councillors and staff from member municipalities, Government agencies, and LTVCA staff about the Conservation Authority's programs and services. Watershed residents, media, users of LTVCA facilities and services, partners including the LTVCA Foundation, and potential partners, are additional vital audiences. Through regular updates of our website and Facebook pages, production of literature such as annual reports, park brochures, conservation program fliers, media releases, newsletters and advertisements, our goals and objectives are broadcast across the watershed.

Special events and tours are hosted including the Moonlight Family Winter Hike and other Longwoods Road Conservation Area activities. An annual volunteer picnic recognizes the support of our Longwoods Road helpers.

Staff initiate and assist with other local environmental projects such as forest and water festivals, and design and create displays for fairs and conferences including the new forestry and habitat restoration display. Fostering partnerships and collaboration with organizations, volunteers and other stakeholders are priority, and help to further the conservation of our watershed resources.

Meeting facilitation, fund-raising with the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Foundation, supervising employment programs, and contributing on conservation committees and working groups, are additional activities which help the LTVCA achieve its objectives.

As well, communications staff worked on many projects for the Thames, Sydenham and Region Source Protection Region, including advertising, and organizing and supporting meetings as per the Clean Water Act.

LTVCA Watershed Report Card

Of special note was the publication of the LTVCA's first Watershed Report Card in the spring. Conservation Ontario hosted a province-wide launch of all Conservation Authorities' report cards on March 18 of this year.

This publication reports on the status of surface water quality, forest conditions, and groundwater in the sub watersheds of the Lower Thames watershed and region. Sub watersheds received a grade for surface water quality, forest conditions and groundwater quality. Readers see the quality of the environment and regions of concern. They learn that healthy watersheds are needed for: safe drinking water, sustainable water resources, adaptation to climate change, healthy forests, clean beaches, edible fish and general well-being. The report card was circulated to our member municipalities and councils, and is available on the LTVCA website for broader viewing. It provides incentive for local, on the ground involvement by watershed residents to help improve watershed quality and ultimately the health of the watershed and all its residents.

It is anticipated that the next LTVCA watershed report card will be issued in five years and will include a section on benthic analysis.

LTVC FOUNDATION

Lower Thames Valley Conservation Foundation

Highlights

The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Foundation works in partnership with the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority, to raise funds towards the wise management of our renewable natural resources. Since 1995, the Foundation has raised over \$650,000 for natural and cultural heritage conservation. Thousands of dollars were raised throughout the year for conservation projects.

The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Foundation assists volunteer organizations with their fund raising efforts and manages the Sharon Creek Trust Fund, initiated by the Friends of Sharon Creek. The Foundation supports special projects and events like the annual Moonlight Winter Family Hike, the Carey Carolinian Arboretum and Trail and the William Erickson Bursary. Through the Foundation's Memorial Forest Program, the Conservation Authority has planted thousands of trees across the lower Thames region. The Foundation submits funding applications to corporations, government agencies, service clubs and other philanthropic organizations to undertake projects and programs, which assist the LTVCA and watershed region.

The Conservation Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit, federally registered charity - Number 898198171 RR0001. Tax receipts are issued for all donations. It is governed by a Board of Directors.

The Foundation helped fund many Conservation Authority and watershed initiatives:

- Sharon Creek tallgrass prairie prescribed burn
- Carey Carolinian Arboretum and Trail
- Longwoods parking lot sign and map
- Taste of Fall Event at Ska-Nah-Doht Village
- Over 420 memorial trees from 2012
- Support for student grants
- William Kingsley Erickson Student Bursary
- Sharon Creek Conservation Area taxes

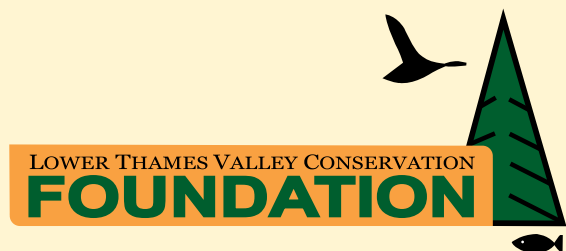


Work continues on the kiosk and Carolinian native plants are on order for four surrounding gardens for planting in the spring of 2014. Carolinian Canada information panels will be designed, along with donor recognition panels for the entire project. These will be exhibited in the kiosk.

Carey Carolinian Arboretum & Trail

Facilitated through the Foundation, a \$26,000 gift in 2008 from a private donor - Dr. Lewis Carey, was used by the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority for an educational "Carey Carolinian Arboretum and Trail" project at Longwoods Road Conservation Area in 2009. Dr. Carey passed away in November of 2009. Large stock Carolinian trees have been planted and interpretive signage installed. An official opening and recognition ceremony was held in 2010. The final phase of this project began in 2012, with the initial excavating for the Carolinian information kiosk.

Both the Conservation Foundation and Conservation Authority realize the importance of creating a Carolinian arboretum and trail system as an educational tool for this unique habitat. Dr. Carey's wish for messaging to reflect the connection between First Nations peoples and the natural surroundings of a Carolinian forest came to fruition, as Longwoods Road highlights both native and natural history.



Making a difference... "naturally"



LOWER THAMES VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

100 Thames Street, Chatham, ON. N7L 2Y8

Tel: 519-354-7310 | Fax: 519-352-3435

Email: admin@ltvca.ca

www.ltvca.ca