



Driving collective impact...naturally





The Niagara Peninsula watershed is situated within the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Attiwoonderk (Neutral), and the Anishinaabeg, including the Mississaugas of the Credit — many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties (No. 3, 4, and 381) and is within the land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today, the watershed is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. Through our *2021-2031 Strategic Plan*, we reconfirm our commitment to shared stewardship of natural resources and our deep appreciation of Indigenous culture and history in the watershed.



Message from the CAO

The theme of NPCA's 2023 Annual Report, 'Driving Collective Impact ...Naturally,' highlights our commitment to collaboration in advancing regional solutions. The positive impact of conservation authority work in our communities and across the Niagara Peninsula watershed is demonstrated by our collaborative successes over the past year.

As we approach the 65th year of NPCA's establishment, this has been a year of reflection and immense pride, seeing ourselves well-positioned to carry forward the legacy of our founding leaders. These visionaries, in the early decades of the conservation movement, contributed significantly to finding creative solutions to the challenges of their day, from flood control measures to safeguarding communities and infrastructure, preserving wetlands and bogs through land securement and restoration, and solving local irrigation problems.

The factors that contributed to these past achievements are still relevant today and have continued to transform our organization: long-term vision and staff ingenuity, unwavering support from partners and the community, a solution-driven collaborative approach, and good environmental stewardship. Over the past few years, we've proven how much is possible. I look back on our performance with immense gratitude against the backdrop of recent challenges.

A major milestone in NPCA's transformation in 2023 was the approval of our administrative office relocation. In keeping with NPCA's climate and sustainability commitment, the new office is located within the boundaries of the Brock District Plan, a sustainable and green urban district. Our asset upgrades included Low

Impact Development (LID) features and electric vehicle (EV) chargers. Our "Trees for All" campaign (one million trees by 2030) garnered significant interest, with 800 landowners participating. Another key highlight was the inclusion of 11 NPCA properties – encompassing 790 hectares – toward Canada's goal of protecting 30 per cent of its lands and waters by 2030. With these additions, NPCA's total contribution to this national target now stands at an impressive 1,622 hectares. Operationally, we set the bar high for client service in planning and permitting, visitor experience, and fiscal responsibility, with diversified revenues to address program gaps and support our various initiatives. Additionally, we acted on our talent management commitments with a new compensation structure for our professional and talented team.

I deeply appreciate the contributions of NPCA's nimble and hard-working staff, our amazing volunteers, our supportive community, Indigenous and our municipal partners, the many organizations we work with, the federal and provincial governments, and our Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation. I'd also like to acknowledge the ongoing support and collective expertise of our colleagues at Conservation Ontario.

Finally, I'd like to extend a special thank you to our Board of Directors for their wise guidance and the unconditional support of Chair Foster and Vice-Chair Metcalfe.



Chandra Sharma - MCIP RPP
CAO, Secretary-Treasurer
Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority



Message from the Chair

Many of us grew up reading (and listening to) a story about the Little Engine that Could. Facing a difficult climb, the little train summoned up all her energy, believed in herself, and managed to make it over the mountain to deliver the cars full of toys to the children below.

My favorite line from the Burl Ives song is the following:

"Just think you can, just think you can and have that understood, and very soon you'll start to say I always knew I could."

As I reflect on the completion of my term as the Chair of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, I can't help but think of this song. It speaks so well to the issues we have faced, the commitments we have made, and the resilience of our organization in meeting and overcoming challenges. To our Board of Directors, our staff, and all the volunteers and partners in our watershed community, I applaud the achievements we have accomplished.

This year, we celebrate the 64th anniversary of this organization. We have made a major decision to relocate our offices to Thorold, a move that was needed for some time. We had the opportunity to purchase various properties throughout the watershed that are integral to our conservation efforts. Improvements have been made to many of our conservation areas, both passive and active, as we continue to connect people to greenspaces. And our foundation, tasked with raising funds to meet many of our organizational goals, is now on firm footing.

Chairing this organization has been one of the proudest experiences of my life. It is not often that you get a chance to lead a dynamic organization such as what we have today, but also an organization that has historically meant a lot to my family. I want to thank the Board for their support and confidence as we tackled significant issues, working hand in hand with our CAO, Chandra Sharma, and the Senior Leadership Team.

It has been an honour to serve you, and I look forward to continuing our train ride together in the name of conservation.



Robert Foster
Chair, Board of Directors
Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority

2023 Board of Directors

NPCA's Board serves the Niagara Peninsula watershed on behalf of their communities and municipalities. Their leadership contributes to policy and program decision making.

James Stewart Beattie
Hamilton

Brad Clark
Hamilton

Donna Cridland
Niagara

Robert Foster (Chair)
Niagara

Brian Grant
Niagara

Diana Huson
Niagara

John Metcalfe (Vice-Chair)
Haldimand County

Patrick O'Neill
Haldimand County

Michelle Seaborn
Niagara

Mark Tadeson
Hamilton



Our Guiding Principles

Watersheds transcend municipal boundaries

We are committed to working with the watershed community to support and create climate-resilient and connected natural systems.

Natural green infrastructure is critical to life

Our day-to-day work conserves and restores our communities' integral ecological, socio-economic, public safety, and health services.

Diverse experiences and ideas lead to better and stronger collective impact and outcomes

We seek to exemplify inclusion and equity through meaningful engagement and collaboration.

Innovation requires learning from each other and the past

As a result, we are progressive, resilient, adaptable, and strive for continuous improvement to remain a trusted and valued partner.



Our Vision

NATURE FOR ALL - We envision a healthy and vibrant environment with shared greenspace and clean water that sustains life for future generations.

Our Mission

To create a common ground for conservation-inspired action and accountability to nature.

Our Values

Integrity

We are responsible, honest, trustworthy, and fair in our decisions and actions.

Respect

We are inclusive and value the diverse range of perspectives and interconnectivity of the watershed community. We foster an environment where we recognize and appreciate each other as well as the communities we serve.

Customer Service

We conduct our business with professionalism, transparency, and equity to achieve high-quality service delivery standards.

Conservation Leadership

We are conservation leaders in the watershed and aim to inspire and empower others through exemplary actions and outcomes.



CONSERVATION AREAS



500,000
Passive Park Visitors



160,000
Paid Visitors at 4
Flagship Parks



45% Increase
in Day-use Visitors



30,000 +
Guests at Signature
Events



1,200
NaturePlus Pass
Members



60 FREE
NaturePlus Passes
at Local Libraries
and Community

FLOOD MANAGEMENT



4

Flood Bulletins Issued



184 KILOMETRES
Floodplain Mapping
Completed

TWENTY- TWENTY THREE

VOLUNTEERS



846 Active
Volunteers



163 New
Volunteers



8,269
Volunteer Hours



\$128,170
Value of Program

RESTORATION



27
Hectares Reforested



3.9
Hectares of Wetland
Restored



3.0
Hectares of Riparian
Habitat



70,700
Trees Planted



4,109
Shrubs Planted



6,338
Wildflowers Planted



9 Agricultural
Best Management
Practice Projects



4 New Pollinator
Gardens

BY THE NUMBERS YEAR IN REVIEW

OUR WATERSHED



476,031
Residents



242,980
Hectares
Watershed Jurisdiction



41
Conservation Areas



2,946
Hectares
Land Holdings



202
Local Waterways



15
Municipalities



83
Surface Water
Monitoring Stations



46
Groundwater
Monitoring Wells

Strategic Plan 2021-2031

Our Priorities and Goals



Through extensive engagement with internal and external stakeholders, NPCA developed six strategic priorities to guide its work over the coming years. Each strategic priority includes specific goals, actions, and deliverables for NPCA to undertake with its partners and community stakeholders to achieve a thriving environment that sustains life for future generations.

The following pages of the annual report will highlight each of our six strategic priorities, as well as the progress that has been made to date on the Strategic Plan goals associated with each priority.

Progress Scorecard Legend



COMPLETED



IN PROGRESS



TO BE INITIATED



1 Healthy and Climate Resilient Watersheds



2 Supporting Sustainable Growth



3 Connecting People to Nature



4 Partner of Choice



5 Organizational Excellence



6 Financial Sustainability

HEALTHY AND CLIMATE RESILIENT WATERSHEDS

Long Beach Conservation Area



Improving watersheds for safe communities and enhanced ecosystems.

OUR GOALS - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Support evidence-based decision-making for climate-resilient watersheds and shorelines

Robust data collection program established by 2023 and data gaps filled by 2026



Protect people and properties from natural hazards and climate impacts

A climate risk and vulnerability action plan developed by 2023 integrated with provincially-mandated watershed-based resource management strategy



Restore and enhance natural habitat, water resources, and forest cover

Increased area (ha) of protected and restored habitat by 2031 measured annually



Manage NPCA lands to increase biodiversity, habitat connectivity, and natural cover

Management plans completed for 100% of NPCA properties by 2031

Highlights

INTEGRATED WATERSHED STRATEGIES

- Natural Asset Inventory initiated
- 11 properties totalling 830 hectares added to Canada's 30x30 protected areas target
- Enhanced Watershed Monitoring Program developed
- Collected 734 surface & 52 groundwater water quality samples
- Deployed 20 water quality sensors
- Decommissioned 2 wells
- Monitored 19 stream gauge stations & 11 climate stations
- Planted 70,700 trees, 4,109 shrubs, & 6,340 native wildflowers
- Reforested 27 hectares & restored 3.8 hectares of wetland
- Completed 9 Agricultural Best Management Practice projects
- Niagara River 'Beach Closings BUI' removal
- Lyons Creek sediment clean-up project initiated
- Drinking Water Source Protection Program focused on Intake Protection Zones in Grimsby (Lake Ontario), DeCew, Welland and Port Colborne (Welland Canal), Rosehill in Fort Erie (Lake Erie), and Niagara Falls (Niagara River)

Conservation of Biodiversity Within the Carolinian Life Zone with 1,622 ha Dedicated to Canada's 30x30 Biodiversity Target

Along the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, NPCA properties are now designated as protected areas under the Global Biodiversity Framework. NPCA added 11 properties with unique ecological characteristics and diverse ecosystems, encompassing 830 hectares, towards Canada's ambitious goal of protecting 30 per cent of its lands and waters by 2030. With this recent addition, NPCA's total contribution to the national protected areas target now stands at an impressive 1,622 hectares.

The Power of Collaboration: Partnering to Better Understand Water Quality

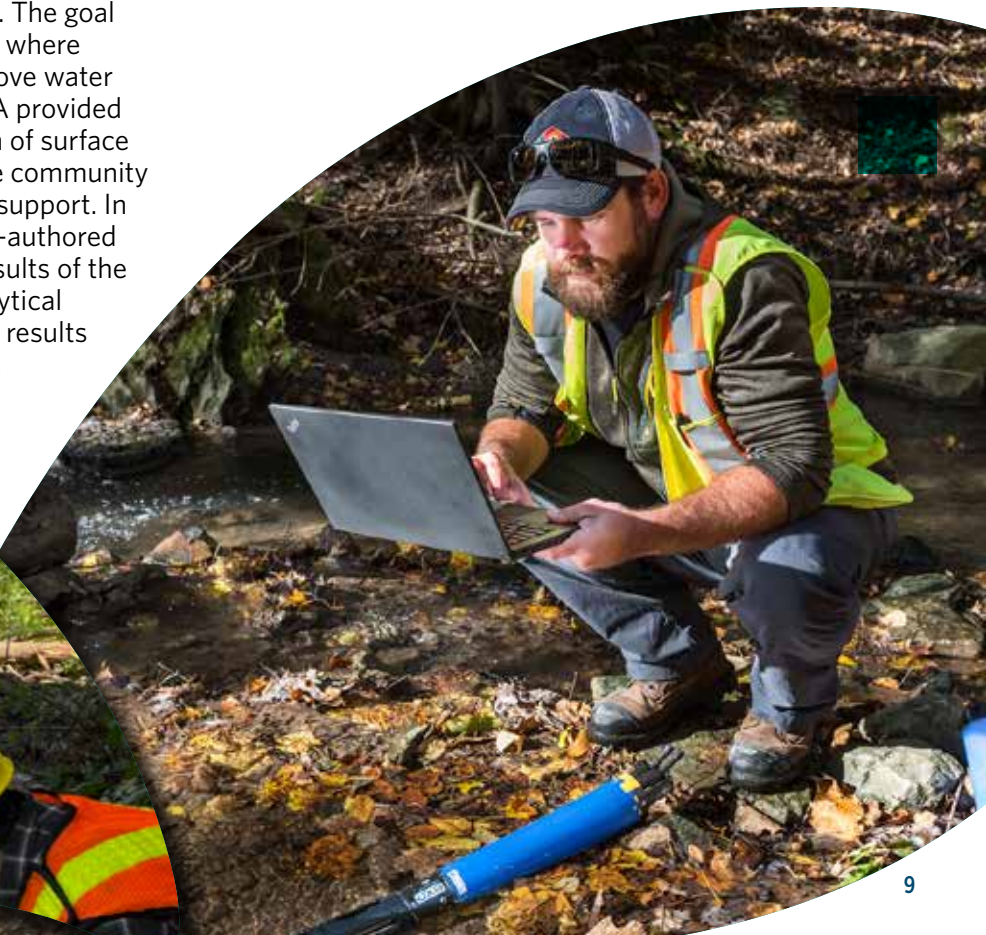
A new partnership with Brock University's Earth Sciences and Chemistry departments focused on monitoring the Wignell Municipal Drain in Port Colborne to identify sources of nutrients contributing to duckweed and algal blooms in the drain and along the north shore of Lake Erie. The goal of the project was to pinpoint nutrient hotspots where restoration efforts can be implemented to improve water quality and prevent harmful algal blooms. NPCA provided historical datasets, including many years' worth of surface water chemistry and benthic macroinvertebrate community and stream geomorphology data for additional support. In July, Brock students, faculty, and NPCA staff co-authored a research poster presenting the preliminary results of the project at the International Conference on Analytical Sciences and Spectroscopy in Ottawa. The final results are pending and will be made available in 2024.

Making Natural Gains: Restoring the Niagara Peninsula Watershed

With a goal of restoring 600 hectares and planting one million trees by 2031, NPCA worked with residents, municipalities, and community organizations to complete more than 50 restoration and Agriculture Best Management Practice projects.

Two Mile Creek Conservation Area Restoration

Restoration of Two Mile Creek Conservation Area in Niagara-on-the-Lake will help reduce ongoing erosion and sedimentation. Using natural materials such as stone and downed ash logs, two structures were installed to redirect the creek's energy away from the banks and to scour built up sediment from the bottom of natural pools. On hot days, these pools provide refuge for fish and other invertebrates that prefer cooler temperatures. Plants were added along the banks of the creek to help secure them against further erosion and enhance critical habitat.





'Beach Closings' Impairment Removed from the Niagara River Area of Concern

An important milestone in the RAP program was achieved in 2023. The 'Beach Closings' Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI), which indicates water quality issues from human sources of bacterial pollution, was officially declared 'not impaired'. The status change is a tremendous achievement, signalling improved environmental conditions thanks to many collaborative actions. The official change in status follows years of monitoring and remediation efforts by several RAP partners and a comprehensive assessment report completed in 2021 recommending the status change. Support for the change came from the community, Indigenous partners, and U.S. RAP representatives through comprehensive outreach efforts from June 2021 to May 2022.

The Niagara River Area of Concern in Canada now has only four remaining BUIs (of a total of 14) to be addressed through further monitoring and remediation efforts. Learn more at niagarariver.ca

Gonder's Flats: The Niagara River's Newest Coastal Wetland

Gonder's Flats is an area adjacent to the Niagara River that includes 1.5 hectares of newly excavated wetland. More than 500 native trees and shrubs have been planted around the wetland by community volunteers, partners, and NPCA staff. The completed wetland retains flood waters during heavy rainfall events and minimizes the impacts of high water levels in the river caused by windy conditions. The project brings the Niagara River Remedial Action Plan (RAP) team one step closer to achieving its

goal of improving overall ecosystem health. Projects like this help build resilience and support local adaptation efforts. They also provide many other benefits, such as protecting shorelines from erosion, creating habitat for fish and wildlife, and supporting biodiversity.

This project was co-led by NPCA and the Niagara Parks Commission, in partnership with Ontario Land Trust Alliance, Land Care Niagara, Ducks Unlimited and the Niagara Community Foundation. Community support was provided by the Town of Fort Erie, Birds Canada, and the Bert Miller Nature Club.



Gonder's Flat



Lyons Creek East Contaminated Sediment Cleanup Project

Long-term scientific monitoring results show that some areas of the Lyons Creek, with historical sources of chemicals called polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), are still impacted by pollution despite many years of monitored natural recovery. This is the last location on the Canadian side of the Niagara River that requires cleanup as part of the RAP program. In May, partners launched the process to clean up the PCB-contaminated sediments in a portion of Lyons Creek East, with a public meeting to engage the community in decision-making. More than 60 people attended, including residents who have been engaged on the project since the selection of a monitored natural recovery approach in 2007.

Building Resilient Watersheds & Robust Ecosystems: Trees for All

In keeping with our goal to plant one million trees by 2031, NPCA and its municipal and local partners collaborated with the federal government through its 2 Billion Trees Program to form **Trees for All**, an aspirational multi-year, high-volume tree planting program for both private and public lands across the Niagara Peninsula watershed. More than 800 private land planting opportunities and 150 public properties were registered for potential planting. Further collaboration with Conservation Ontario, Tree Canada, Forests Ontario, and partner municipalities is underway to achieve this collective ambition.

Additionally, NPCA is leveraging the federal 2 Billion Trees program to develop a local Native Seed Collection Community of Practice for the Niagara Peninsula watershed. This effort aims to collaboratively identify collection needs, establish a network of sites, and a partner-coordinated schedule for certified collection needs, as well as storage and transfer protocols.

Monitoring Ecosystems for Evidence-Based Decision-Making and Conservation Land Planning

Significant vegetation species found along the escarpment provide a variety of unique habitats for a diverse range of species. In 2023, NPCA completed vegetation, wildlife habitat, and bat surveys at three of its conservation areas along the escarpment—Rockway, Beamer Memorial and Woodend. This data will be used to develop a list of needs for each, as part of upcoming management planning processes.

In 2023, bat monitoring surveys focused on selected areas with potential development or public activity. Data from the acoustic monitors on site and recent studies by other agencies and students have shown that Beamer Memorial, Rockway and Woodend conservation areas provide suitable habitat for both migratory and non-migratory bat species. All areas appear to provide day habitat (forest or rock), foraging habitat, and a critical migration corridor, in addition to a potential maternity roost of a migratory bat species at Rockway.

To protect habitat for these species, it is recommended that these areas maintain forest cover and edge habitat near water, as well as diverse and structured forest, consisting of loose bark species and snag trees with hollows. Protection of south-facing rock slopes is also recommended, and further bat studies are advised for proposed developments in other unmonitored areas of these parks.

Restoration By The Numbers

27 Hectares Reforested
3.9 Hectares of Wetland Restored
3.9 Hectares of Riparian Habitat
70,700 Trees Planted
4,109 Shrubs Planted
6,338 Wildflowers Planted

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Rockway Conservation Area



Helping to create resilient communities through coordinated land-use planning, hazard management, green infrastructure, and excellent client service standards.

OUR GOALS - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Maintain a high standard of client services, tools, and procedures for planning review and permits

Improvement in client service metrics year over year



Lead an integrated watershed management approach to support planning and policy for protecting and enhancing watersheds

100% of sub-watershed plans for future growth areas updated by 2031



Lead the implementation of sustainable technologies and green infrastructure best practices for climate resilience and sustainability

A green infrastructure and sustainable technologies program established at NPCA by 2026

Highlights PLANNING, GROWTH & CLIENT SERVICES

- 379 permits
- 96% of permits within client services timelines
- 880 planning applications
- 357 compliance and enforcement matters
- Low-impact development features at St. Johns & Rockway conservation areas
- Regulatory mapping updates
- 1,552 sq. m of pervious parking lot (Rockway) in the escarpment area



Facilitating Expert Guidance: Planning & Policy

Maintaining resilient watersheds requires responsible growth and development through effective, evidence-based land use planning. Implementing policies, programs, and services that minimize impacts of flooding and erosion while enhancing ecosystems is imperative for a biodiverse and robust landscape. Our collective ambition requires collaboration with communities and experts to ensure we are fostering a resilient future for the next generation.

In 2023, NPCA actively participated in updating our municipal partners' Official Plans. As part of this process, NPCA's role was to ensure that municipal policies for development are consistent with provincial policies for natural hazards, and compatible with NPCA's policies for issuing permits. Reviewing municipal plans also involves comparing proposed mapping against NPCA's regulation mapping of natural hazards, including floodplains, shorelines, wetlands, valleylands, and watercourses. Many municipalities rely on NPCA's natural hazard mapping for their Official Plans.

Through the Official Plan process, municipalities are required to provide policies for a variety of issues, including housing, transportation, the environment, water and wastewater services, and cultural heritage. The approach to addressing these important issues is unique to each municipality. As such, NPCA must work closely with them to develop solutions that work for every situation while upholding its mandate to protect people, property, and infrastructure from natural hazards.

NPCA has also invested in staff capacity to work closely with local municipalities on infrastructure projects. This includes participating in environmental assessments for projects such as road widenings, bridge repairs and replacements, water service and sanitary sewer works, recreation trails, and other initiatives related to municipal infrastructure. NPCA ensures that proposed infrastructure work will not be negatively impacted by natural hazards and that projects are designed to meet NPCA policies to facilitate the permit application process.

APPLICATION TYPE	2023
BUILDING PERMIT CLEARANCE	298
CLEARANCE OF CONDITIONS	11
CONSENT	34
DRAFT PLAN APPROVAL EXTENSION	10
DART PROTOCOL	7
DRAFT PLAN MODIFICATION	1
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	18
FORMAL PROPERTY INQUIRY	99
MINOR VARIANCE	57
MUNICIPAL PRECONSULTATION	215
NIAGARA ESCARPMENT DEVELOPMENT PERMIT	32
OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT	20
OTHER	24
PLAN OF SUBDIVISION	16
REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT	0
SECONDARY PLANS	2
SITE PLAN CONTROL	20
PLAN OF CONDOMINIUM	3
ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENT	13
TOTALS	880

PERMITS BY MUNICIPALITY	2023
TOTALS	109
GRIMSBY	43
HALDIMAND	21
HAMILTON	76
LINCOLN	65
NIAGARA FALLS	90
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE	60
PELHAM	51
PORT COLBORNE	25
REGION OF NIAGARA	5
ST. CATHARINES	87
THOROLD	50
WAINFLEET	65
WELLAND	74
WEST LINCOLN	59
TOTALS	880



Protecting People and Property from Natural Hazards and Keeping an Eye on the Watershed: Compliance & Enforcement

In 2023, NPCA welcomed a third compliance officer to help address increased workload related to complaints and violations across the watershed. NPCA also continues to build and enhance collaborative partnerships with local municipal enforcement and partner regulatory agencies, such as Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

A total of 357 complaints and potential violations were received in 2023, with 91 of these reported by NPCA's municipal and regulatory contacts. Additionally, 38 Notices of Violation were issued, 13 permits were issued for unauthorized works through voluntary compliance and six offences involved court proceedings.

COMPLAINTS BY MUNICIPALITY	2023	%
FORT ERIE	81	22.7
GRIMSBY	9	2.5
HALDIMAND	19	5.3
HAMILTON	18	5.0
LINCOLN	30	8.4
NIAGARA FALLS	30	8.4
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE	15	4.2
PELHAM	13	3.6
PORT COLBORNE	19	5.3
ST. CATHARINES	15	4.2
THOROLD	13	3.6
WAINFLEET	40	11.2
WELLAND	23	6.4
WEST LINCOLN	27	7.6
NO LOCATION	5	1.4
TOTALS	357	100



Leveraging Low-Impact Development: Rockway & St. Johns Conservation Areas

In keeping with our climate change goals, NPCA focused on demonstrating good planning on its conservation areas throughout 2023. The new 4,000 square metre access to Bruce Trail and Rockway Conservation Area boasts of several new features including 2,448 square metres of natural landscaped areas.

The 1,552 square metre pervious paved parking lot is a Low-Impact Development (LID) with a 0.5 metre deep granular infiltration gallery. The gallery captures and stores rainfall, reducing the impacts of uncontrolled stormwater runoff and improving the local groundwater regime in the escarpment area. The parking lot also includes wheelchair-accessible parking spots, bicycle racks, and electric vehicle charging stations to promote access for outdoor enthusiasts of all abilities.

Funding support from the Federal Canada Community Revitalization Fund, the Canada Nature Fund through Conservation Ontario, and Niagara Region made the purchase and transformation of this area into an excellent public amenity.

In 2023, upgrades were completed at St. Johns Conservation Area in Pelham and Thorold to improve public safety and enhance accessibility. An infiltration gallery was installed along the edges of the conservation area's parking lot to direct stormwater runoff into the ground, helping to recharge local groundwater.

Big Forks Creek & Beaver Creek Floodplain Mapping

Floodplain mapping for 110 kilometres of Big Forks Creek in Wainfleet and Haldimand County and 74 kilometres of Beaver Creek in West Lincoln was completed with robust public consultation. These important studies have identified the extent of the 100-year floodplain and the infrastructure that would be impacted within it. The studies also recommended measures to reduce the effects of flooding and outlined additional impacts due to climate change. Floodplain mapping is a critical component of NPCA's regulatory framework for mandated planning and permitting activities related to natural hazards.

Beaver Creek & Big Forks Creek

West Lincoln Haldimand Wainfleet

Floodplain Mapping Info Session

The NPCA would like to present the progress of the Beaver Creek and Big Forks Creek floodplain mapping project.

HOW TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK:

1. Visit getinvolved.npca.ca or scan the QR code to submit questions and comments online.
2. Written comment can be sent to address below.
3. Comments can be emailed to smiller@npca.ca.
4. Attend the information session.

Information Session
Wednesday, May 3, 2023
 Wellandport Community Center
 5042 Canborough Road (Regional Road 63),
 Wellandport, in the Township of West Lincoln

The meeting will run from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Niagara Peninsula
CONSERVATION
nature for all

www.npca.ca
Phone: 905.788.3135 | Fax: 905.788.1121
 250 Thorold Road West, 3rd Floor, Welland, ON L3C 3W2

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE

Thanksgiving Festival at Ball's Falls Conservation Area



Creating equitable access to greenspace for the health and well-being of people, and educating the next generation of environmental leaders

OUR GOALS - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Create equitable access to greenspace for the health and well-being of people

Public greenspace within urban or near-urban areas increased by 2031

Lead nature education, environmental stewardship, and volunteerism

An outreach, stewardship and education strategy developed by 2024

100% of actions from outreach, stewardship, and education strategy implemented by 2031

Improve cultural connections and heritage appreciation

A cultural heritage strategy developed by 2025

100% of actions from cultural heritage strategy implemented by 2031

Promote the watershed as a destination of choice for adventure, culture, and ecological tourism

A marketing and ecotourism strategy developed by 2025

100% of actions from marketing and ecotourism strategy implemented by 2031

Highlights

CONSERVATION PARKS & OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- Welcomed **160,000** paid day-use visitors at four flagship conservation areas – a **45%** increase
- Welcomed **500,000** visitors at the passive conservation areas
- **11,300** students engaged in outdoor education camps and programming within 10 conservation areas
- Sold **1,200** *NaturePlus* Pass memberships
- **60** free *NaturePlus* passes shared with local libraries and community organizations
- Attracted **30,000** visitors to our signature events
- **32** seasonal campers



The Restorative Power of Nature: Wind Phone

In partnership with Hospice Niagara, NPCA installed the region's first Wind Phone at Ball's Falls Conservation Area in the summer of 2023. The phone is for anyone who has lost someone special in their life. While the phone is not connected to anything, it offers an opportunity for people who are grieving to talk with their special person and let the wind carry their words and thoughts over the trees and into the beyond.

The phone provides those in grief a way to express and process their feelings and share memories. This unique partnership highlights the restorative power of nature at Ball's Falls and many other greenspaces, as well as the healing benefits of spending time outdoors.

Nature For All: NPCA's NaturePlus Pass Library Program

NPCA's popular *NaturePlus* Pass Library Program continued to gain traction throughout 2023, as more residents used these passes to visit conservation areas where parking fees apply for free. Launched in 2021, the program has enabled hundreds of visitors to connect with nature in their own backyard.

The passes are available at public libraries throughout the watershed, as well as at Brock University's library and the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre. In 2024, 120 passes will be available to the public through our partner institutions. If you have a library card, you can sign out a pass and freely access Ball's Falls, Binbrook, Chippawa Creek, and Long Beach conservation areas. Passes are often accompanied by nature backpacks that include binoculars and guidebooks.

As part of its vision of "*nature for all*", NPCA is committed to ensuring equitable access to greenspace for all people and communities across the watershed.

Nurturing the Next Generation of Environmental Leaders: Outdoor Education

In 2023, NPCA was thrilled to see the full return of outdoor education programs, field trips, and camps across its conservation areas. Throughout the year, staff delivered outdoor education programming to more than 11,300 students and day campers. In collaboration with local school boards, NPCA aims to finalize a long-term education strategy in 2024.

Nearing a Half-Century: 49th Annual Thanksgiving Festival

In 2023, the annual Ball's Falls Thanksgiving Festival surpassed record attendance with an estimated 28,000 attendees throughout the four-day weekend. The festival featured more than 150 unique craft and artisan vendors, as well as musical and family entertainment on the main stage. Guided hikes and demonstrations at the Heritage Village provided natural and historical learning opportunities for guests of all ages.

NPCA will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Ball's Falls Thanksgiving Festival in 2024. Recognized as one of the most popular and highly regarded festivals in Niagara, we are eager to celebrate this milestone with the community.



PARTNER OF CHOICE

Reawakening All of Our Senses



Strengthening our relationships with stakeholders, partners, the watershed community, and Indigenous Peoples.

OUR GOALS - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Strengthen government relations towards collective outcomes and impact



Agreements with all three upper-tier municipalities in 2023 and lower-tier municipalities by 2025



Agreements with lower-tier municipalities by 2025

Foster relationships with the community, non-government organizations, businesses, agriculture, industry, and academic institutions for collective outcomes and impact



A stakeholder and community engagement strategy developed by 2025

100% of actions from stakeholder and community strategy implemented by 2031

Improve engagement with local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples that supports shared stewardship



Indigenous engagement guidelines developed in 2022

Staff provided with Indigenous awareness training

Highlights

ENGAGEMENT, PUBLIC OUTREACH & EDUCATION

- 3 upper-tier municipal MOUs executed
- Engaged 846 active volunteers & welcomed 163 new volunteers
- Led, co-led and supported 51 stewardship events & 20 community presentations
- Benefited from 8,269 volunteer hours for a time-commitment value of more than \$128,000
- Volunteers planted 2,100+ trees, shrubs and plants & 2,000+ wildflowers and grasses
- Added 4 new pollinator gardens to the watershed
- Participated in 36 external community events
- 34,000+ social media community
- 1,000+ media stories
- 20,947 residents engaged through the NPCA Get Involved portal



2023 Public Advisory Committee

Agriculture: Albert Witteveen and Lennie Aarts

Business/Industry: Lesley Clarke

Development/Building: Jonathan Musso

Environmental: William Rapley

Métis Citizen: Tracy Boese

Planning: George McKibbin

Public-at-Large: David Cribbs, David

Wyllie, Naheed Qureshi

Urban Indigenous: Cindilee Ecker-Flagg

Volunteer/Conservation Area User: Philip Beale

Youth: Lageera Chatheecha

Engaging in Learning, Reflection and Shared Stewardship with Local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples

Reawakening All of Our Senses

As part of its goal to support Truth and Reconciliation, NPCA once again partnered with the Niagara Folk Arts Festival and Kakekalanicks consultants to deliver its Reawakening event series, first launched in 2022, featuring local Indigenous artists, storytellers and knowledge keepers. This year's instalment of the program, titled Reawakening All of Our Senses, was held at Ball's Falls Conservation Area on the Saturday, one week before the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30.

The event welcomed more than 100 participants for an evening of special programming that featured 'Indigenous Stories by the Fire,' and interactive storytelling, drumming, music, and dancing under the stars. The event also included Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe Elders Dave Labbe, Mawla Shawana, Franklin McNaughton, and George Johnson, who shared stories that have been passed for generations with traditional dance and song. Additionally, programming featured the talents of award-winning country singer-songwriter and storyteller, Jim Jacobs, from Six Nations of the Grand River.

Restoring Nature Together

Thanks to an existing partnership with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN), an event in June 2023 brought together community members and NPCA staff to remove invasive poison ivy and garlic mustard from the sites before replanting them with 150 native wildflowers. MCFN also requested the planning of white sage, a culturally significant medicine. Once fully established, the gardens will be a fitting example of partnership and collaboration, showcasing what can be accomplished by restoring the landscape through responsible stewardship.

Collaborating & Engaging for Shared Stewardship

Throughout 2023, NPCA staff from its Indigenous Engagement Working Group participated in numerous community events and learning opportunities with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners.

April: Water Walk at Merritt Island for Indigenous students at District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board schools, led by Soaring Eagles students and the Niagara Regional Native Centre

June: Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre
Indigenous Solidarity Day

September: Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation's 'Caring Together Week' Open House

October: Niagara Region Métis Council's annual Harvest Dinner



Conservation Heroes: Our Incredible NPCA Volunteers

Thank you to all the amazing people, groups, schools, and community organizations that care enough to take action to help care for our watershed.



Invasive Species Action with Partners & Volunteers

A recent study indicated that invasive species are as costly as natural disasters, with costs to control biological invasions increasing by 702 per cent from 1980-1999 to 2000-2019. Early detection and response can significantly reduce the environmental impacts and the costs of control.

For the second year, NPCA collaborated with the Invasive Species Centre (ISC) and local municipalities to support a 'Hit Squad' focused on removing European water chestnut (EWC) from a 30 kilometre stretch of the Welland River, which is one of only three known EWC populations in Ontario. The rapid response efforts in the river, led by ISC, have been extremely successful, resulting in a significant reduction of individual plants removed from the river.

In 2023, only 900 plants were found and removed, compared to 7,000 in 2022.



Only Rain Goes Down the Drain: Yellow Fish Road with Crossroads Public School

Since 2006, NPCA has been the local delivery partner of Trout Unlimited Canada's Yellow Fish Road program, which raises awareness about storm drain runoff and its impact on freshwater ecosystems. The program engages kids in learning about the importance of stormwater runoff by painting a yellow fish with the words "Rainwater Only" above storm drains and sharing educational materials with neighbours.

60 local youth from the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake painted 30 storm drains in their neighbourhood to fulfill requirements towards becoming Eagle Scouts. The event garnered significant media attention, spreading the message of caring for and protecting our precious ecosystems, and helped young leaders achieve their goal of becoming Eagle Scouts.

A Labour of Love: Glanbrook Conservation Committee

For more than 30 years, passionate, knowledgeable, and caring members of the Glanbrook Conservation Committee (GCC) have volunteered to support habitat restoration and improvement projects at Binbrook Conservation Area. The committee has championed a range of initiatives, such as planting native species, building Meadowlark bird perches, running a fishing derby, and acting as stewards of the Tyneside Trail.

In 2023, with funding from Enbridge's Fueling Futures grant program awarded to NPCA, GCC members built a large habitat structure for Barn Swallows. Installed on a recently acquired and restored property within the Binbrook site, the structure provides shelter and supports nesting for Barn Swallows – a bird species whose population has declined by more than 80 per cent in Canada throughout the last 40 years due to habitat loss and pesticide use.

Something Old, Something New: New Cooper Shop Heritage Demonstration & Exhibit

A small group of dedicated NPCA volunteers – Philip, Howie, Bob, and Mark – spent hours researching, building, collecting, developing, and training for a new coopering heritage demonstration at Ball's Falls Conservation Area. A cooper is a craftsman trained in making casks, barrels, buckets, troughs, vats and other containers from timber staves and wood or metal hoops. The group also made improvements to the display barn on site and created a working model of the grist mill to engage visitors in how it works.



Youth in Action: The Next-Generation of Environmental Leaders

In 2023, NPCA worked closely with the Green Herons — a group of passionate and dedicated youth who undertake positive environmental actions to improve their community. These actions include building turtle nest protection boxes, monitoring turtle road crossings, making road signs to remind drivers to watch for baby turtles during hatching season, and creating pollinator habitats, just to name a few. The Green Herons worked with NPCA and Land Care Niagara to build and install habitat boxes for bats and helped to release rescued baby turtles at Chippawa Creek Conservation Area in partnership with the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre.

Putting Waste in its Place: The Eco-Defenders

Jane and Howie Gadsby are the brother-sister duo behind the Eco-Defenders and have spent thousands of hours sorting waste at events across the Niagara Peninsula watershed for nearly a decade. At the 2023 Ball's Falls Thanksgiving Festival, the Eco-Defenders diverted more than 3,000 kilograms of organics and recyclables from the landfill. Since 2016, they have helped to divert more than 32,000 kilograms of recyclable festival waste from local landfills, which is equal to the weight of 10 orca whales!

Waste diversion and reduction are key components of NPCA's environmental stewardship, climate action, and sustainability goals. Organics in landfills are a significant generator of methane gas, which is 25 times as potent as carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. The Eco-Defenders have played a significant role in advancing climate action in the Niagara Peninsula watershed through their efforts.



Environmental Stewardship in the City of Thorold

In the fall of 2023, NPCA worked with the City of Thorold to host two community planting days to support the City's goal of growing its tree canopy. More than 450 native trees and shrubs were planted with support from community groups, volunteers, and Niagara College ecosystem restoration students. Among those volunteers were City of Thorold councillors, 20 youth from the 128 Thorold Flying Dragons Air Cadet Squadron, residents, families, and individuals looking to lend a hand. The vast range of support received for this initiative demonstrates progress on NPCA's mission 'to create a common ground for conservation-inspired action and accountability to nature' while advancing many strategic priorities.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE



Striving for excellence through high service delivery standards and accountability to the environment and its people.

OUR GOALS - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Attract, retain, and invest in high caliber, diverse talent to deliver superior outcomes

A talent management strategy developed in 2022

100% of actions in the talent management strategy implemented by 2031

Improve internal operations and processes

A digital transformation strategy developed in 2023

100% of actions in the digital transformation strategy implemented by 2031

Provide high standards of customer service

Customer service guidelines developed in 2022

All staff provided customer service training

Demonstrate leadership in addressing climate change and sustainable practices through NPCA lands and operations

A corporate climate change action commitment and launch of a strategy in 2022

100% of actions in corporate climate change strategy implemented by 2031

Highlights

WORKPLACE CULTURE

- Created **100** youth employment opportunities in green jobs & internships
- Provided **40** staff development & training opportunities
- Retained more than **30%** of staff for more than 10 years
- Achieved **0** days lost due to injuries
- Developed a new compensation program
- Diverted more than **3,000** kg of waste through the Eco-Defenders
- Completed **3** low-impact development projects
- Installed **3** electric vehicle charging stations
- Procured **1.5 M** in capital projects
- Board approved Head Office relocation

A Much-Needed Move

A major milestone in the transformation of NPCA was the approval of the Head Office relocation to provide staff with adequate working space for our administrative and technical needs. In keeping with NPCA's climate and sustainability commitment, the new office is located within the boundaries of the Brock District Plan that is focused on providing a sustainable and green urban district with balanced vehicle and pedestrian circulation within a complete community.

With a barrier-free space for staff, clients and guests, open concept design, plenty of windows for natural lighting, energy-efficient LED lighting, and nearby recreational amenities like the Canada Summer Games Facility, the office is well-equipped to support current and future needs of the NPCA. Many existing furnishings will be repurposed, bicycle racks will be installed to promote active transportation, and there is the ability to install electric vehicle charging stations. The building also includes a bright and open wellness and collaboration space for staff, and a dedicated office and meeting space for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation. Our new space will bolster staff collaboration, communication, morale, accessibility, and professional pride.



Talent Management

Following the completion of NPCA's 2021-2031 Strategic Plan, a talent management initiative was launched, leading into a comprehensive compensation review in line with our goal to attract, retain, and invest in high-caliber, diverse talent to deliver superior outcomes. We anticipate that our new compensation program will bolster market competitiveness to aid in recruitment and retention of top talent through a competitive and fair compensation structure aligned with the corresponding job market and geographical area. This new program will also ensure that NPCA is competitive in the market while providing a fair and equitable job evaluation system.

In keeping with our commitment to staff development, a collaboration with the Goodman Group at Brock University resulted in 14 staff completing a Project Management Fundamentals program.

Digital Transformation & Operational Health

A comprehensive record management program has been launched with the aim of transitioning the organization to Laserfiche and Escrib.

Capital Improvements for Asset State-of Good Repair

2023 was a significant year for NPCA Asset upgrades. With 21 capital projects completed, improvements to our conservation areas will provide benefits for generations to come. Capital projects were managed by a capable team of NPCA staff with high standard of financial and procurement discipline.



ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE



Rob Shoalts

25 Years

Manager, Land Care

Rob is known as 'Mr. MacGyver' because he can solve almost any issue, problem, or breakdown and is especially skilled in woodworking. He is extremely knowledgeable and intelligent, with a knack for architectural and blueprint engineering and design. He has played a role in building from the ground up and refurbishing most of the buildings at NPCA conservation areas. He rebuilt the historic log cabin at Ball's Falls Conservation Area using traditional building methods and he played a lead role in renovating NPCA's office in Welland. He is also a fine cabinetmaker, having made the display cases at the Ball's Falls Centre for Conservation. He is solid and dependable with a fantastic attitude and takes immense pride in working for NPCA, having mentored various staff over the years.



Eric Gervais

5 Years

Manager, Corporate Support Services

During Eric's five years with NPCA, he has formalized what was once a very 'informal' procurement process and has implemented procedures to ensure the fairness, impartiality, and public transparency of all projects tendered. He has issued more than 150 Requests for Proposals and more than 350 Purchase Orders. Eric is always available to support NPCA with jobs ranging from buying a few folding chairs for the new office boardroom to obtaining heavy construction equipment for Central Workshop. He is the holder of the keys, manager of the vehicle fleet, and lover of the Montreal Canadiens.



Brian Lee

5 Years

Administrator, GIS

Brian's energy, enthusiasm, and passion for GIS were palpable from his first day. He takes his GIS Administrator position very seriously and literally bounces when talking about spatial data. When given the opportunity, Brian will inform anyone and everyone how GIS allows for better business decisions, leads to more effective collaboration, and enhances business workflows. Brian's passion for geospatial data is only rivaled by his passion for golf. When he is not knee-deep in data, he can be found on the golf course. Brian's contributions to NPCA have been invaluable, and we look forward to his continued successes.



Thomas Proks

5 Years

Specialist, Source Water Protection & Hydrogeology

Thomas started with NPCA in December 2018, stepping into the role of coordinating the Source Water Protection Program. He has used his knowledge and skills to work closely with the Source Protection Committee in the development and implementation of the local source protection plan. Thomas has been keeping both the Source Water Protection Program and the Groundwater Monitoring Program running smoothly. He is a great coworker, and we're very fortunate to have him on our team!

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Cave Springs Conservation Area



Ensuring a financially stable and sustainable organization and continued service-delivery through innovative business models, diverse funding sources, and best practices.

OUR GOALS - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Ensure responsible, sustainable, and sound fiscal practices

Variance against the budget no greater than 20%



Optimize self-generating revenue using innovative approaches

Increased self-generated revenue



Improve asset management and close the state of good repair gap

Maintenance of Good Facility Condition Index

NPCA is committed to ensuring a responsible and sustainable organization with sound fiscal management. In 2023, our variance of actual results against our budget was 4.5 per cent — well in line with our strategic targets.

NPCA successfully leveraged existing funding sources and innovative partnerships to diversify funding and optimize self-generating revenues. For every \$1 of municipal funding, NPCA raised an additional \$1.89 in revenues, thereby reducing our reliance on the municipal levy and taxpayers.

NPCA also continued to build strong partnerships and collaborations with a wide range of community partners and all levels of government. It also continued to diversify and strengthen the financial health of the organization through increased grant applications and new revenue streams to reduce its dependence on taxpayers and municipal levies.

To improve asset management and close the state of good repair gap, NPCA invested \$1.9 million in tangible capital assets in 2023 and completed 21 projects. A capital planning module, providing a framework for long-term capital planning and informing asset management strategies, has been implemented for use in the 2025 budget process. Work is also underway on the development of our natural asset management accounting initiative.

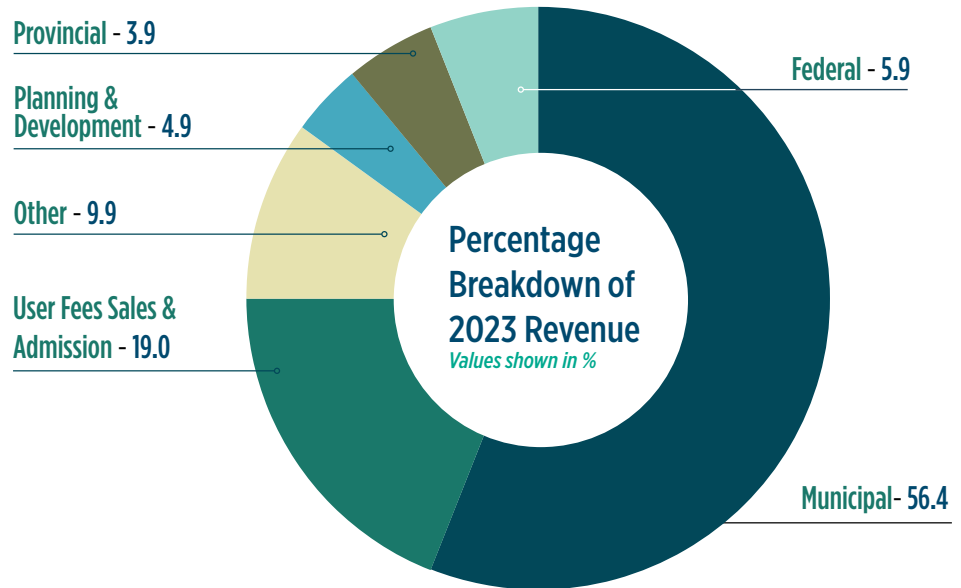
Highlights FINANCIAL STABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

- **5.4 million** in self-generated revenue – representing **33.8%** of total revenues
- Secured **2.1 million** in grant funding – a **375%** increase from \$460,000 in 2021
- Completed **\$1.9 million** in capital projects
- Variance against budget only **4.5%**
- Transitioned to new legislative budget format
- Successfully implemented **2** newly required accounting principles

NPCA Financials

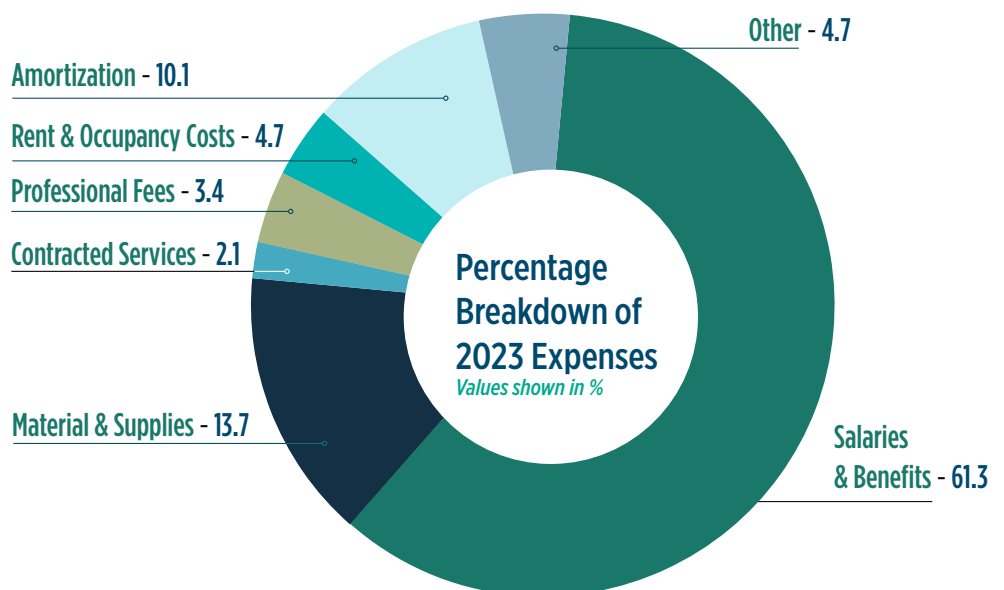
2023 Revenues

NPCA's operating revenues are classified into two streams — government (municipal, provincial, federal) and self-generated. The municipal levy represents 56 per cent of our total funding envelope, down from 60 per cent in 2022. NPCA generated revenues — fees for service activity, user fees, and admissions — contributed 33.8 per cent (\$5.4 million) to gross revenues, up from 33.2 per cent in 2022.



2023 Expenses

In keeping with historical trends, labour costs and materials and supplies represent the largest share of operating expenses at 74.9 per cent.



NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

SCAN HERE
TO DONATE



Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation (NPCF) is a registered charity dedicated to raising funds that aid in the conservation of our natural environment for present and future generations. When you donate to NPCF, you help support conservation projects and programs that contribute to improving water quality, increasing greenspaces, wetland and habitat restoration, and environmental research and education.

Message from NPCF Chair

As I look back on my first year as Chair of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation Board, I'm proud to say 2023 was filled with great progress and potential.

Building on the exceptional work of my colleague and predecessor Tom Insinna, our Board took important steps in launching our 'Nature for All, for Always' campaign, bringing together a team of talented Board members who have shown perseverance and an unwavering commitment to our vision of nature for all.

In May, we were fortunate to welcome two new board members – Doug Wilson from Pelham and Brett Harrington from Hamilton. The experience, ingenuity and energy Doug and Brett bring to our Board and our fundraising campaign have been immeasurable.

In August, we recruited Sharon Pfeifer to the newly created role of Development and Investor Relations Officer, enhancing our ability to establish NPCF as the charity of choice for environmental giving across the Niagara Peninsula watershed.

Over the course of the year, NPCF board members and staff actively engaged in numerous professional and community events. NPCF also received generous financial backing from several prominent organizations, helping to connect people to nature and inspire our next generation of environmental stewards.

As we look ahead to 2024, I'm confident we can build on the exciting momentum created by our team over the past year. We are building a community of donors who share our vision to conserve and improve upon the health of our watershed – to plant more trees, protect more land, educate more youth and make nature more accessible in our communities.

We invite you to join us! Whether as an advocate, a volunteer or a donor, your support for the NPCF is critical in helping us to achieve our vision of Nature for All, for Always.



Diana Huson
Chair, NPCF Board of Directors

New NPCF Board & Staff Launch 'Nature for All, For Always' Campaign

In 2023, NPCF elected its new Board of Directors to lead it into an ambitious year, including the launch of a three-year \$5-million capital campaign to support NPCA's next-generation conservation work.

Funds raised by NPCF support the work of NPCA to protect and create healthy and climate resilient watersheds, to support sustainable growth across the Niagara Peninsula watershed, and to connect people to nature. Contributions are also used to plant trees, build trails, and enhance green infrastructure, educate youth and the next generation of environmental leaders, and secure and protect publicly accessible greenspace.

2023 NPCF Board of Directors

Diana Huson-Chair Barbara Greenwood-Vice-Chair Donna Cridland-Treasurer Mike Balsom-Director
Doug Wilson-Director Brett Harrington-Director Tom Insinna-Member Robert Foster-Ex-Officio John Metcalfe-Ex-Officio



WATCH THE NPCA YEAR IN REVIEW VIDEO



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Member of Conservation Ontario

