



Lake Simcoe Region
conservation authority



2023

Budget Companion



Our Vision

Healthy lake, healthy land,
healthy life...for generations
to come.

Our Mission

We collaborate to protect
and restore the Lake Simcoe
watershed with innovative
research, policy and action.





Table of Contents

A Bit About Us and the Watershed	4
Corporate Services	6
8 Corporate Communications	
9 Facility Management	
10 Financial Management	
11 Governance	
12 Human Resource Management	
13 Information Management	
Ecological Management	14
16 Ecosystem Science and Monitoring	
17 Forestry Services	
18 Restoration and Regeneration	
Education & Engagement	20
22 Community Programming	
23 School Programming	
Greenspace Services	24
26 Land Management	
27 Land Securement	
Planning & Development	28
30 Development Planning	
31 Permitting and Enforcement	
Water Risk Management	32
34 Flood Management and Warning	
35 Source Water Protection	
36 Water Management/Restoration	
37 Water Science and Monitoring	
Watershed Studies & Strategies	38
40 Climate Change	
41 Research and Innovation	
42 Watershed Planning	



A Bit About Us and the Watershed

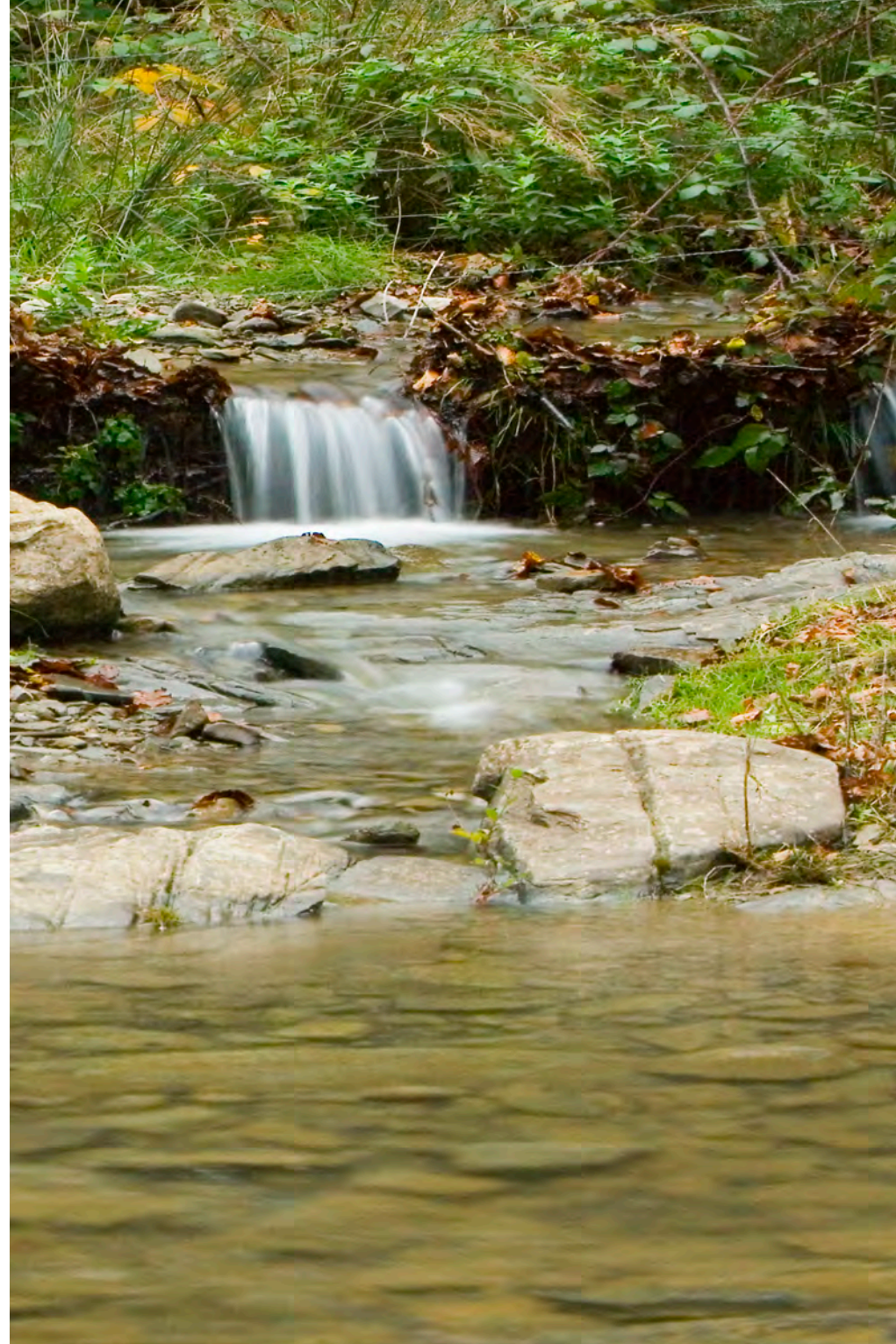
The Lake Simcoe watershed, which is 3400 square kilometres, sweeps across 20 municipalities, from the Oak Ridges Moraine in the south to the Oro Moraine in the north, through York and Durham Regions, Simcoe County and cities of Kawartha Lakes, Barrie and Orillia.

The watershed has been inhabited and cared for by Indigenous Peoples since creation, and we recognize and thank the Williams Treaties First Nations, including the Chippewas of Georgina Island, Rama and Beausoleil and the Mississaugas of Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha, the Credit and Scugog Island, for their historic connection and unwavering care for this land and water.

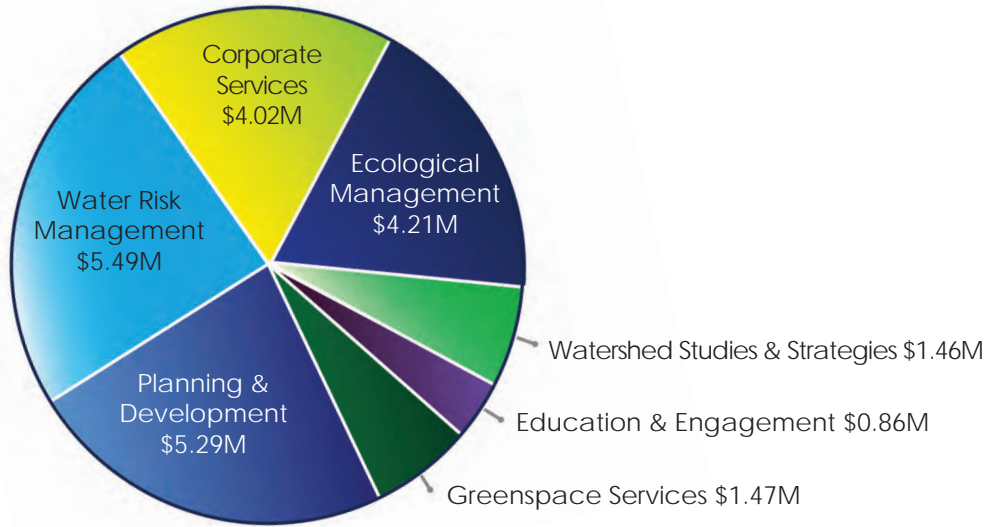
We are the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. We are a local watershed management organization incorporated under the province of Ontario's *Conservation Authorities Act*, and for over 70 years now, we have been focused on conservation, restoration and management of this incredible ecological gem.

To deliver on our mandate and commitments, we employ over 100 full-time, part-time, contract and seasonal staff across numerous professional fields who provide expertise within the following seven service areas, which are detailed in the following pages:

- Corporate Services
- Ecological Management
- Education & Engagement
- Greenspace Services
- Planning & Development Services
- Water Risk Management
- Watershed Studies & Strategies



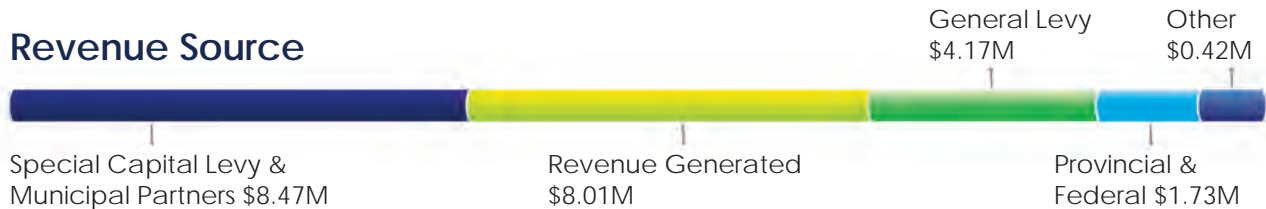
2023 Budget Summary \$22.80M, Total FTEs 108.6



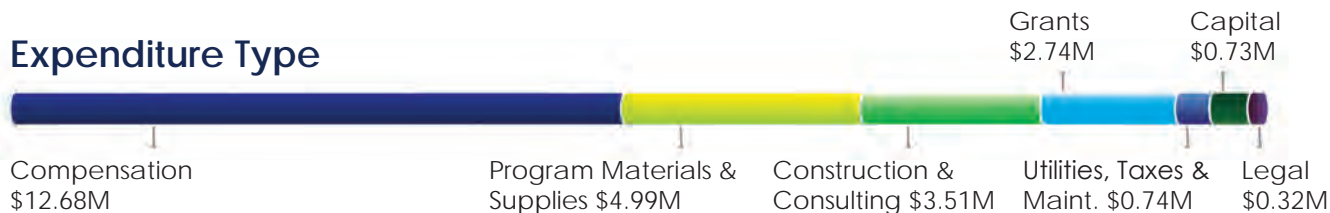
Operating and Capital Split



Revenue Source



Expenditure Type



*\$2.9M Recoverable Expenses in Corporate Services

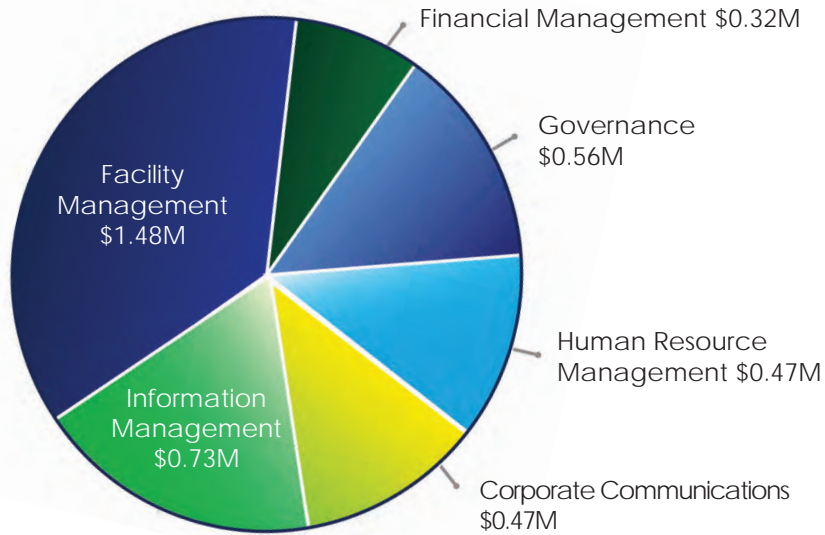




Corporate Services



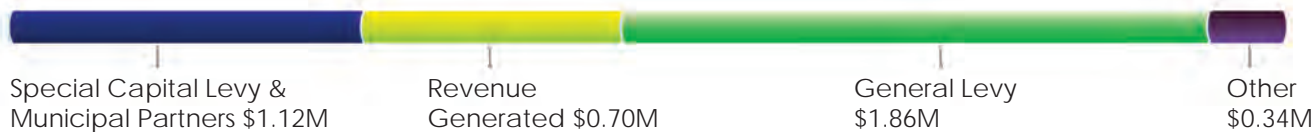
2023 Corporate Services Budget \$4.03M, 33.2 FTEs



Operating and Capital Split



Revenue Source



Expenditure Type



*\$2.9M Recoverable Expenses in Corporate Services

Corporate Services provides leadership and management in the delivery of services central to the successful functioning of the entire organization. Corporate Services consists of the following program areas:

- Corporate Communications
- Facility Management
- Financial Management
- Governance
- Human Resource Management
- Information Management



Fast Facts

- We experienced a 32% increase in LinkedIn followers
- We presented 23 watershed residents with Conservation Awards at our first in person ceremony since 2019

2022 Achievements

- Redesigned and returned to delivering the Conservation Awards celebration in person
- Finalized review on the phase-one development of an online tool to modernize access to subwatershed plans
- Completed and submitted a communications strategy, including recommendations for influencing the reduction of road salt use, to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
- Completed resource materials and provided communications to augment an information webinar on the invasive Spangy Moth
- Responded to various issues of public interest, including the acquisition of the Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve (formerly Maple Lake Estates lands), the Bradford Bypass, and continued Pefferlaw Dam inquiries

Corporate Communications

Corporate Communications provides strategic communications and marketing oversight and delivers a broad range of initiatives to inform, inspire, influence, and motivate government partners and people of all ages in our watershed communities, to collaborate and support initiatives to achieve a healthier watershed.

2023 Focus

- Redevelop and realign our social media strategy to meet corporate objectives
- Complete branding and redesign work to support our corporate signage strategy
- Collaborate on the development of a watershed-based resource management strategy
- Continue implementing priority recommendations in Corporate Communications and Engagement Strategy
- Continue to influence strategic, targeted communications to increase participation in and understanding of programs and services

Outlook

- Our reputation continues to gain positive momentum, with increasing interest and coverage by traditional media, growing social media reach and impressive levels of engagement with our watershed residents, partners, and governments
- Increased online activity and targeted communications and marketing is leading to higher levels of subscription and knowledge of our programs and services

Service Pressures

- The continuing evolution of social media as a channel to engage with audiences has created a constant need for staff to focus on developing high volumes of relevant, quality content in multiple formats (i.e., video, reels, infographics, etc.)
- Growth of our programs and the success of strategic, targeted communications and marketing challenges existing communications capacity
- Continuing challenges associated with effectively reaching audiences across the geographic, demographic, and socio-economic expanse and diversity of the watershed





Fast Facts

- Replacement of 118 lights and fixtures at the Scanlon Creek Nature Centre and workshop facilities reduced annual hydro costs by \$2,850 and will provide a 129% return on investment in less than one year
- The conversion of all Conservation Authority fleet cars to electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles has decreased fuel consumption and reduced our carbon footprint

Facility Management ◀◀

Facility Management oversees the management of all assets (buildings and infrastructure, vehicles, and equipment). This includes purchases, leases, repairs, scheduled maintenance, licenses, insurance, utilities, and taxes.

2023 Focus

- Replace and upgrade the end-of-life, flat roof on the Head Office building to enhance energy efficiency
- Complete tender processes to initiate construction of the new Scanlon Creek Nature Centre
- Replace three corporate fleet pick-up trucks with more fuel-efficient vehicles
- Install security cameras at the Scanlon Creek Nature Centre, Operations Centre and Works Yard
- Install high-quality audio/visual equipment in meeting rooms at Head Office and the Operations Centre

Service Pressures

- Adapting facility and fleet vehicle service levels to meet new and evolving business delivery models, as well as employee health and safety requirements
- Supply chains and market fluctuations continue to impact service and material costs, causing delays of up to 6 months for some scheduled projects and product deliveries
- Delays in the development and construction of the new Nature Centre require more maintenance activities to ensure the safe delivery of Education programs

Outlook

- Inflation, supply chain disruptions, and availability of materials is anticipated to impact current and future maintenance and construction projects and green fleet vehicle replacements

2022 Achievements

- Completed roof replacements at Head Office and the Farmhouse at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area and retained the services of a consulting engineer to complete assessment of the flat roofing systems at Head Office
- Completed facility upgrades at the Scanlon Creek Operations Centre, including demolition of a derelict balcony and installation of light standards along walkways and parking lots
- Replaced all lights with energy efficient LED (light-emitting diode) fixtures at the Scanlon Creek Nature Centre and Works Yard
- Retrofitted bathrooms at the Scanlon Creek Nature Centre to provide non-gendered options

Fast Facts

- 2022 is our seventh consecutive year without an appeal related to our Freedom of Information requests

2022 Achievements

- Conducted an independent, third-party procurement audit that identified \$5-10K annual savings in telecommunication and waste management services for the Conservation Authority. Audit also confirmed current best pricing in many other operational areas that were audited
- Updated our overhead charge methodology to ensure full cost recovery across all program areas for 2023
- Completed the first draft of the costing of our programs and services as required under the changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act*, and met with all funding partners to communicate the expected changes and estimated timelines of next steps
- Completed the selection and configuration of new platforms to enable improvements to procurement and on-line payments

Financial Management ◀◀

Financial management is responsible for day-to-day financial operations such as payroll and accounts payable/receivable as well as budgeting, procurement, risk management, procured legal services, quarterly and annual financial reporting, records management, freedom of information requests/reporting and reception services.

2023 Focus

- Implement new payment software to enable online payments for clients across our various programs. This program is expected to reduce staff time and save 20% in processing fees
- Continue work on our records management project, seeking Board approval of a policy and retention schedule, following a legal review
- Enable more efficient financial processes by implementing new electronic workflow process to streamline purchase orders and expense claims processing
- Transition to a new, improved, and more efficient procurement platform
- Continue dialogue with funding municipalities to navigate the budget process changes required for implementation in 2024, under the *Conservation Authorities Act*

Outlook

- Significant fiscal restraints, new processes developed through remote work and our drive for business excellence will continue to spur new program and process improvements and efficiencies

Service Pressures

- Changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* will change our future budgets starting in 2024, including how we request levy funding from our municipal funding partners
- Increasing complexity of budget, forecasting and financial reporting related to project accounting and additional grant submissions with limited staff capacity





Governance ◀◀◀

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) provides expert knowledge, strategic advice, and recommendations to the Board of Directors on policy, program, and budget decisions. The CAO also provides operational leadership to more than 100 staff to guide and influence processes, decisions, and implementation, to advance our mission.

2023 Focus

- Continue focussed implementation of Transformation 2022-2024, and 2023 Annual Priority projects
- Continue transition and response to the Housing Supply Action Plan and the associated changes impacting Conservation Authorities
- Navigate the challenges brought about by Bill 109, Bill 229, Bill 23 and support our partner municipalities through the transition of roles and responsibilities

Outlook

- *Conservation Authorities Act* changes will change the structure, funding and delivery of our programs and services for a stronger and more secure future
- The federal government's commitment to improving the health of Lake Simcoe provides excellent funding and partnership opportunities for critical watershed restoration projects into the future

Service Pressures

- Regulatory and mandated changes to Conservation Authority programs and services under Bill 23 and the *Conservation Authorities Act*
- Minister's Zoning Orders will drive the need for additional restoration projects to compensate for environmental impacts, adding additional pressure on existing capacity and priorities

Fast Facts

- Online, annually, we publish a Board-approved budget, a description of all programs and services (Budget Companion), as well as an audited financial statement
- Our primary municipal watershed funders are Durham & York Regions, Bradford West Gwillimbury, Innisfil, New Tecumseth, Oro-Medonte, Ramara, Barrie and Kawartha Lakes

2022 Achievements

- Successfully concluded our campaign for the transfer of the former Maple Lake Estates land into our ownership. We now own and will protect in perpetuity, the 360 hectares of young forest, wetland and grassland located in the Town of Georgina; temporarily named the Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve
- Successfully concluded work on the Minister's Conservation Authorities Working Group
- Continued to operationalize regulations under the *Conservation Authorities Act*
- Established a successful hybrid work model, bringing staff back to work in the office a minimum of two days per week, improving client service and staff collaboration



Human Resource Management ◀◀

Human Resources is responsible for the effective support and management of people in the organization through the provision of services such as attraction and retention, health and safety, performance management, employee relations, learning and development, benefits and compensation design and administration and policy development.

2023 Focus

- Enhance our health and safety program through a partnership with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and their Health and Safety Excellence Program
- Complete the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging roadmap to guide future policy and program development
- Undertake an organizational review of all positions and evaluate compensation
- Continue to focus on leveraging technology to create efficiencies and enhance Human Resource and Health and Safety workflow processes

Service Pressures

- Uncertainty, due to changes to provincial environmental legislation creates challenges around addressing employee concerns and providing support and guidance
- Ensuring employees remain engaged and have collaborative opportunities in a hybrid working environment

Outlook

- Robust diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging strategies are linked to a healthier, more satisfied, diverse, and productive workforce, placing an emphasis on how we move forward with improved corporate policies, practices, and initiatives, to attract and retain employees
- Succession, learning, and development opportunities are critical to employee performance, satisfaction, attraction, and retention, making strong talent management practices a focus now and into the future

Fast Facts

- We have two Joint Health and Safety Committees comprised of management and employee representatives that work closely with Human Resources to develop, maintain and improve our health and safety program
- 83% of our employees responded to the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) survey providing us with valuable feedback and data to build and enhance our DEIB program

2022 Achievements

- Successfully returned our organization to a hybrid working environment
- Continued successful in-person recruitment to ensure employment requirements were met
- Completed survey and staff engagement activities to support phase one of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy

Information Management ◀◀

Information Management is responsible for providing and managing secure, reliable, and integrated information technology (IT) solutions that align with our business and strategic goals while delivering excellence in client service.

2023 Focus

- Complete the groundwork for our records management strategy to increase access and security for vital documents, files, and data
- Develop a security strategy recommending the critical security advancements required to protect our digital services and assets
- Implement improvements to our Microsoft 365 environment and build a dependable platform for our information management program
- Continue to update our geographic information system mapping applications and technology to allow staff faster access to support decision making
- Building modern, more accessible, and collaborative workspaces/solutions for more of our business areas

Outlook

- Having staff working in two office locations and remotely is driving improvements to our network access and our ability to better collaborate with all partners
- Acquisition of more accurate elevation information from light detection and ranging (LIDAR) mapping for York Region is going to support the work needed to better predict where flooding will occur

Service Pressures

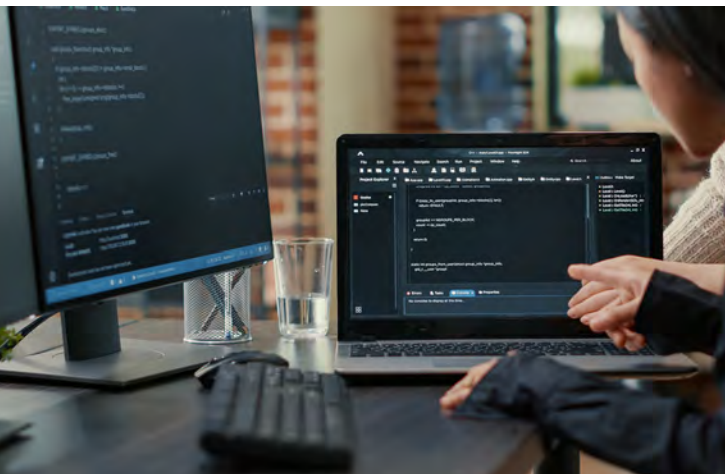
- Information management in the form of both overall content management and records management is driving us to shift more business processes to digital formats, leading to greater efficiency
- Systems and cyber security are a constant threat that require us to balance costs while keeping our network running smoothly and protecting stored, private data
- The ongoing need for flexible and adaptable network hardware and software to support staff working remotely
- Growing pressure on resources to properly store and maintain larger and more complex data
- Information technology is continuously evolving, making it challenging to stay current with a limited budget and resources

Fast Facts

- 800,000+ spam emails bombard our servers each year
- There were 1306 downloads from our Geographic Information System Open Data Portal 2022

2022 Achievements

- Completed several security upgrades for our network to add additional layers of protection against cyber threats
- Completed a major upgrade of the Plan review tracking system to support a more efficient business process
- Built a geographic information system information Hub to better support internal staff who use this information and services
- Acquired new and more accurate elevation data for the northern portion of our watershed to support improved floodplain mapping
- Upgraded our network infrastructure with new servers and increased storage

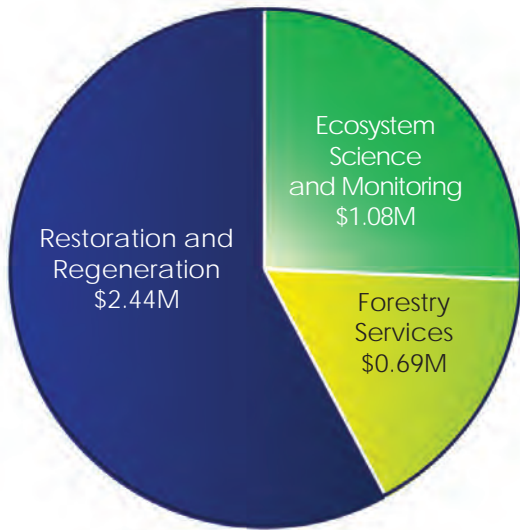




Ecological Management



2023 Ecological Management Budget \$4.21M, 13.4 FTEs



The goal of Ecological Management is to manage natural heritage systems (forest, wetlands, lakes, rivers, etc.) within the watershed. We do this through monitoring, to understand the current state of our watershed, and then by identifying and implementing restoration projects. Ecological Management consists of the following program areas:

- Ecosystem Science and Monitoring
- Forestry Services
- Restoration and Regeneration

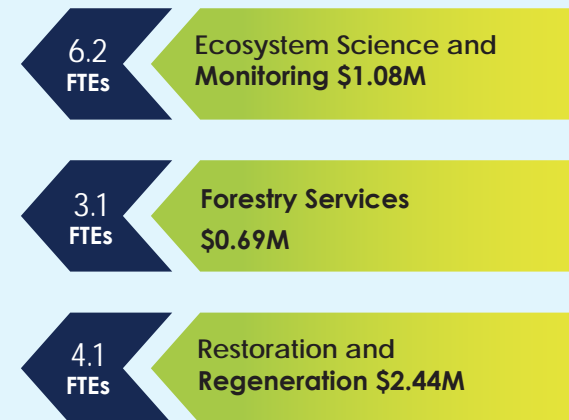
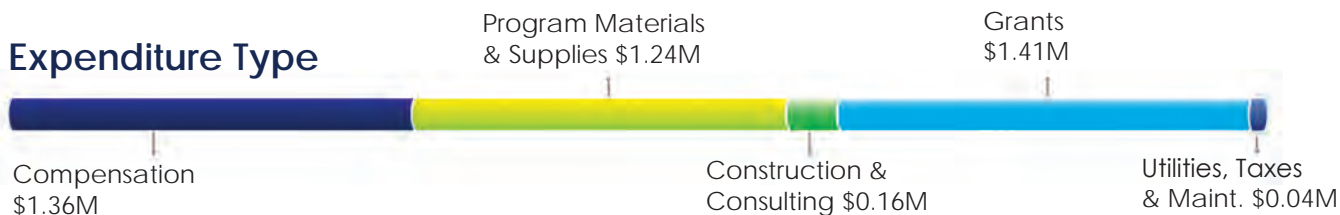
Operating and Capital Split



Revenue Source



Expenditure Type



Ecosystem Science and Monitoring ◀◀

The Ecosystem Science and Monitoring program assesses the health of Lake Simcoe's nearshore zone, the status of fish and aquatic insect populations and evaluates tributary water quality to support science-based management decisions.

2023 Focus

- Conduct lake-wide invasive mussel sampling at 700+ sites to support investigation into lake nutrient cycling dynamics and the role invasive mussels are playing in the storage of phosphorus
- Conduct chemical contaminants sampling of water and sediment in watershed tributaries and Lake Simcoe
- Continue to investigate changing nutrient cycling dynamics in Lake Simcoe through enhanced water quality sampling, aquatic plant sampling and invasive mussel sampling

Outlook

- Updated invasive mussel survey results will be used to understand their role in lake nutrient cycling dynamics to improve lake management strategies
- Climate change and the impacts of new invasive species make continued monitoring data even more critical to formulate management actions

Service Pressures

- Maintaining a robust ecosystem research program can only be supported through continued external funding such as Provincial Lake Simcoe Protection Plan support

Fast Facts

- Invasive starry stonewort made up 70% of all aquatic plants in Cook's Bay in 2019 but decreased to only 23% of all plants by 2021. It has since increased back to making up 33% of the plant community in 2022
- 2021 paper on starry stonewort and aquatic plants in Lake Simcoe is the 5th most cited paper published since 2020 in the journal Lake and Reservoir Management (out of 60 papers)
- 500-plus tributary water quality samples are collected every year to evaluate ecological health and to calculate phosphorus loads

2022 Achievements

- Completed calculation of phosphorus loads to Lake Simcoe for hydrologic years 2018-2020. The 2020 phosphorus load, at 58 tonnes, was one of the lowest recorded in the last two decades
- Initiated enhanced water quality sampling of the Holland Marsh pump-off water to improve phosphorus load calculations for agricultural polders
- Investigated the relationship between phosphorus loads and lake dissolved oxygen, through enhanced aquatic plant, invasive mussel, and water quality sampling
- Collected water quality samples at 22 stations, to support lake and river ecological health assessments and calculation of phosphorus loads
- Conducted biologic monitoring at 38 sites, including fish population and aquatic insect sampling, to support assessment of the ecological health of watershed rivers and streams





Forestry Services ◀◀

The Forestry Services program aims to implement best forest management practices that contribute to watershed and community health.

2023 Focus

- Continue to implement afforestation program upgrades in response to changing climatic conditions, and building resilience to address shorter, unpredictable planting seasons and shifts in suitable planting stock
- Begin Urban Forest Studies in Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville, in partnership with York Region and the local municipalities, to inform forest management planning decisions
- Renew agreements with watershed partners for ongoing program delivery, including Durham Regional Forest management, York Region Grow Your Legacy planting program and Simcoe Trees

Outlook

- Partnerships with York Region and Simcoe County will be renewed in 2023 to support continued delivery of tree planting services to increase natural heritage cover, address climate change impacts, and contribute to overall community health

- New opportunities for afforestation and the establishment of large planting blocks, riparian habitat and woodland corridor connections are available on the new (temporarily named) Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve property

Service Pressures

- Delivered planting services to watershed landowners, completing 94 site visits and planting nearly 40,000 trees and shrubs across 22.66 hectares
- Removed over 250 fallen and hazardous trees at 9 properties following the severe derecho storm in May
- Sold 12,300 seedlings to over 100 landowners through our annual Do It Yourself Planting Program
- The Spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar dispar*) population collapsed in 2022 due to impacts of naturally occurring pathogens

Fast Facts

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2022 Achievements

- Removed hazard trees near facilities, along conservation areas trails and Durham Regional Forest trails, including responding to the major derecho storm event in May
- Completed a Vulnerability Assessment, Adaptation and Mitigation Plan for York Regional Forest, providing recommendations and management strategies to address the anticipated impacts of climate change
- Monitored year-2 of the outbreak of Spongy Moth (*Lymantria dispar dispar*) and provided educational resources and guidance to watershed partners and landowners

Fast Facts

- Farmers installing cover crops protected 381 of hectares of farmland and will reduce 154 kilograms of phosphorus each year
- Over 570 volunteers planted over 5,670 trees, and shrubs
- Tile outlet control structures were installed to control water on 10.93 of hectares of land, reducing contaminants and sediment from entering our watercourses

2022 Achievements

- Provided over 90 grants to private landowners and community groups through our restoration assistance program
- 3% of the projects completed this year helped increase biodiversity and 56% enhanced pollinator habitat
- Partnered with our watershed partners to host 33 community events, planting trees and shrubs, removed invasive species and engaging community volunteers

Restoration and Regeneration ◀◀

The restoration and regeneration program implements natural heritage, agricultural best management practices and watercourse restoration projects to enhance, restore and create natural features to improve water quality, control water quantity and infiltration within the watershed.

2023 Focus

- Continue to focus on reporting our projects using key performance indicators and other environmental benefits
- Discover new opportunities to implement restoration projects with public and private landholders to achieve ecological gains
- Conduct ongoing outreach with the agricultural community to secure commitments to implement restoration projects and environmental best management practices

Outlook

- Through the Ecological Offsetting program and upcoming government grants, we have exciting opportunities to deliver and support natural heritage restoration projects across the watershed

Service Pressures

- Timing and location of offsetting funds dictates when and where projects occur
- It's difficult to gain commitments from private and public landowners to implement restoration projects
- Added pressures from climate change and severe weather are changing how projects should be implemented



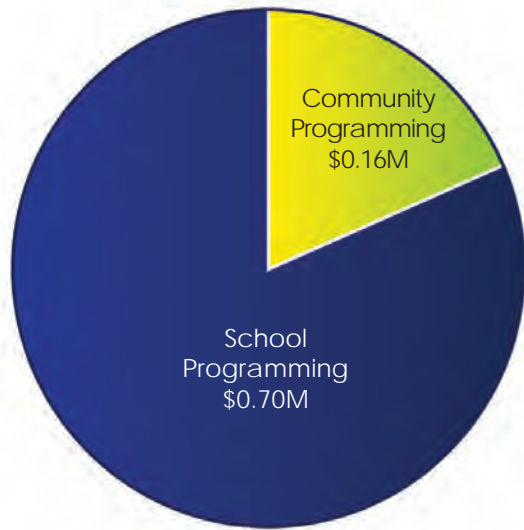




Education & Engagement



2023 Education & Engagement Budget \$0.86M, 5.0 FTEs



The purpose of Education and Engagement is to engage learners of all ages, interests and abilities through programmed learning experiences that raise awareness, impart knowledge, create understanding and inspire action that leads to real and lasting change. Education and Engagement consists of the following program areas:

- Community Programming
- School Programming

Operating and Capital Split



Revenue Source



Expenditure Type



Fast Facts

- Forged new partnerships with the Children's Treatment Network and YMCA of Simcoe Muskoka Immigrant Services to pilot programs for marginalized groups
- Engaged with over 2600 children, youth and adults through various in-person and virtual community programs

2022 Achievements

- Hosted our first Spring into Birding family event at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area
- Returned to in-person program delivery, supporting York Region District School Board's Summer Institute at two different camp locations
- After a two-year COVID-related delay, successfully facilitated a Therapy in the Woods summer program for early learners with disabilities, in partnership with the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre

Community Programming ◀◀

Community programming provides unique learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults, enhancing participants' connections to the health of the Lake Simcoe watershed in areas where they live, work and play.

2023 Focus

- Re-launch of Spring into Scanlon March Break camp after a three-year pause
- Build on existing municipal partnerships to expand summer camp programming to include field trips to Scanlon Creek
- Pilot a weeklong summer Forest School camp as a new model of delivery to provide more options for local families

Service Pressures

- Challenges remain in striking a balance between programs that are both full cost recovery and accessible to everyone
- Delays in advancing the final design and construction of the new Nature Centre has translated into extended time in an existing building no longer adequate for our needs

Outlook

- Post-pandemic public interest in visiting our properties is translating into opportunities for new and re-envisioned community programs





Fast Facts

- 14,180 student engagements through field trips, in-person schoolyard visits and virtual program delivery
- Facilitated a Coffee and Chat with select Simcoe County secondary teachers to listen to and understand their needs and experience with climate change education
- Designed and delivered two exciting new grade 7 programs, "Telling Nature's Stories: Animal Tracking" and "Tech for Nature: Investigating Ecosystems"

School Programming ◀◀

School Programming provides provincial curriculum-connected, experiential, and engaging programs and services for students and teachers from kindergarten to grade 12.

2023 Focus

- Expand school board partnerships to offer field trips and professional learning opportunities to more students and teachers
- Design and develop targeted programs to increase offerings related to climate change, flood risk and natural hazard education
- Pursue two grant opportunities with a focus on accessibility through competitive pricing and the availability of an all-terrain wheelchair at Scanlon Creek

- Our proven adaptability and innovation demonstrate that we will continue to succeed and remain key players in education programs and service delivery

Service Pressures

- Uncertainty with labour unrest among education unions poses ongoing challenges to meeting program and service deliverables.
- Delays in advancing the final design and construction of the new Nature Centre has translated into extended time in an existing building that is no longer adequate for our needs

Outlook

- As teachers look to connect students with nature, post-pandemic, our school programs and services are in higher demand than ever before, providing an opportunity to build partnerships and generate more revenue

2022 Achievements

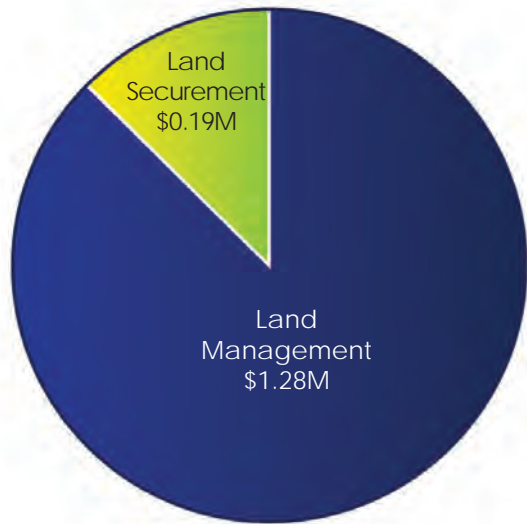
- Field trips to the Scanlon Creek Nature Centre resumed after a near two-year hiatus
- Signed Service Agreement with York Catholic District School Board for student programming, bringing total number of school board contracts to 4
- Introduced a revised fee schedule to help move closer to full cost recovery
- Launched 'Walking Together Through the Four Seasons', a multi-partner, multi-year initiative to support York Region Early Childhood Educators in taking young learners outdoors to learn on the land



Greenspace Services



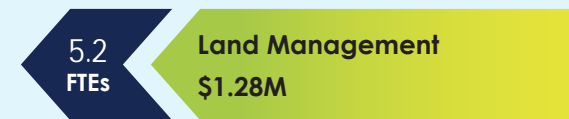
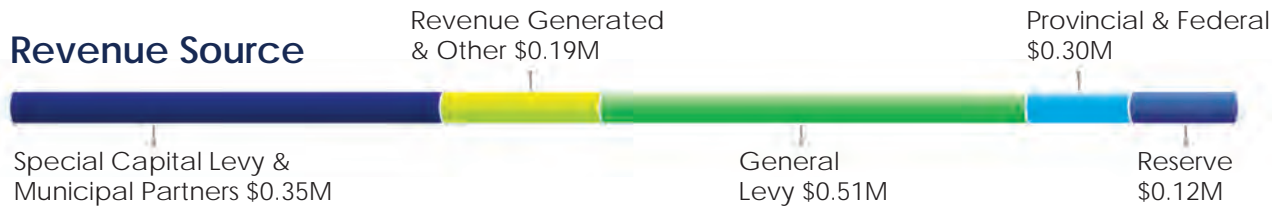
2023 Greenspace Services Budget \$1.47M, 6.6 FTEs



Greenspace Services ensures that valuable greenspace is enhanced and restored and that recreational opportunities are provided in safe, well maintained natural settings, so that our watershed residents can enjoy connections to nature, and a high quality of life. Greenspace Services consists of the following program areas:

- Land Management
- Land Securement

Operating and Capital Split





Fast Facts

- We protect more than 2,750 hectares of land in the Lake Simcoe watershed
- More than 178,000 people visited our most popular conservation areas in 2022
- The Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve added over 360 hectares of woodland, wetland, and agricultural lands to the Conservation Authority's protected network

2022 Achievements

- Began management and maintenance activities on the newly acquired land in Georgina (temporarily named Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve) including perimeter assessment, natural heritage and wildlife habitat monitoring and signage installations
- Secured \$125,000 through the Federal Development Tourism Relief Program to support trail and infrastructure upgrades at Beaver River Trail Conservation Area
- Completed the Rogers Reservoir Management Plan, developed in partnership with local stakeholders
- Replaced five footbridges along hiking trails at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area, improving safety for visitors and providing expanded access for maintenance activities
- Installed benches at Rogers Reservoir, Scanlon Creek, Thornton Bales and Beaver River Conservation Areas, promoting our new Memorial Bench Program, in partnership with the Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation
- Worked with Brock Township to improve trail conditions for visitor safety at Beaver River Conservation Area

Land Management ◀◀

We approach land management with the goal of striking a balance between conserving the natural environment and facilitating opportunities for outdoor recreation, education, and awareness.

2023 Focus

- Reconstruction of two footbridges at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area
- Installation of 25 new benches, at multiple conservation areas, as part of the Memorial Bench Program
- Commencement of a Conservation Areas Management Strategy, as required under the *Conservation Authorities Act*
- Creation of a high level ecological report that documents current use and condition of Mabel Davis Conservation Area
- Completion and initial implementation of a Conservation Areas Maintenance Program Review
- Implement Phase 1 of the Conservation Areas Signage Strategy

Outlook

- Conservation lands continue to be an important resource for the community, providing health and wellness benefits, with visitor levels remaining above pre-pandemic levels

Service Pressures

- Conservation lands in urban areas face added pressures from increased levels of trail use, encroachment and encampments by people experiencing homelessness
- Aging infrastructure (roads, trails, signage, etc.) to support recreational activities on our lands continues to require significant resources to ensure effective maintenance and management

2022 Achievements

- Added over 360 hectares of wetland, forest and agricultural lands to our landholdings with the acquisition of the (temporarily named) Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve in Georgina and retained a surveyor and environmental consultant to complete boundary assessments and survey updates to support Master Planning
- Continued to advance our Land Disposition Strategy, including transfer of Pefferlaw Conservation Area to the Town of Georgina
- Enrolled 5 conservation properties in the Canada Protected Areas Database, recognizing them for significant key natural heritage features, including Provincially Significant Wetlands, Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest, rare, threatened, or endangered species, significant forest and other ecological features

Land Securement

Our Land Securement program continues to seek opportunities to acquire lands through donations, easements and/or purchases for the purposes of connecting urban areas to greenspace to increase recreational opportunities and to restore, enhance or create ecological features to support the watershed's natural heritage systems.

2023 Focus

- Continue implementing Priority 1 and 2 initiatives as part of our Land Disposition Strategy
- Initiate Master Planning for the Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve, consulting with stakeholders and partners to establish management priorities, restoration targets and to identify opportunities for passive recreation
- Develop workplans and strategies to address *Conservation Authorities Act* requirements with respect to land disposition and acquisition
- Continue to seek opportunities for strategic land acquisition based on our Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project (2019-2025) and Ecological Offsetting Program

Outlook

- Infrastructure development within the watershed continues to impact conservation lands, requiring agreements to facilitate access and ensure protection of environmental features

Service Pressures

- Costs associated with the purchase of property and the associated legal fees continue to rise
- Access to consistent funding for land securement initiatives continues to be challenging, which increases reliance on monetary donations, grants, and government funding programs

Fast Facts

- The Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve and neighbouring easement properties now represent our largest collection of protected lands at 446 hectares. The natural heritage features on the property, make it qualify for nearly 100% tax relief through the Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program

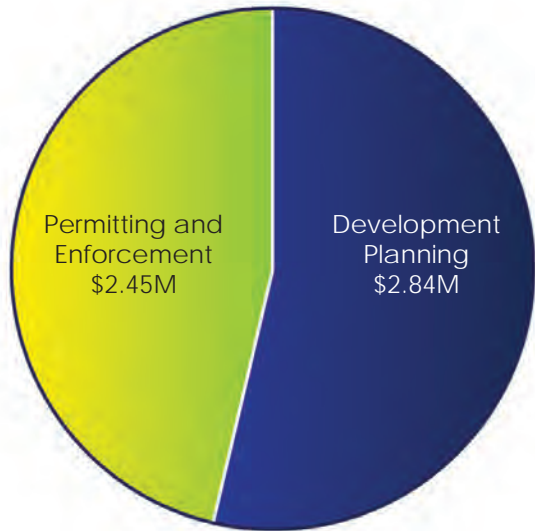




Planning & Development



2023 Planning & Development Budget \$5.29M, 33.1 FTEs



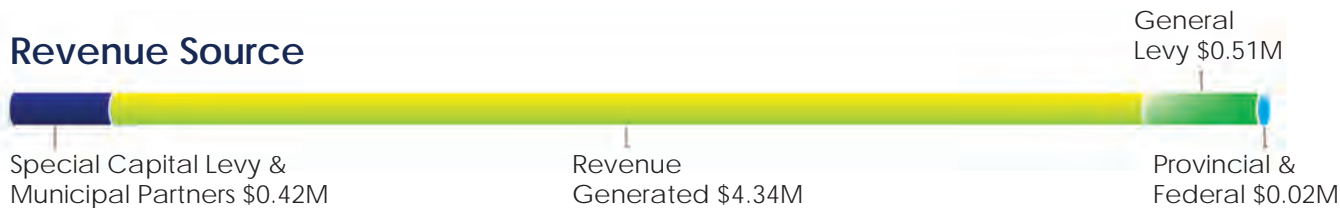
Planning and Development Services ensures that development in the watershed progresses in a sustainable manner that will protect natural heritage features, direct development away from natural hazard lands and will protect our water resources. We follow a planning-first principle which ensures that planning permissions are in place before we consider any further approvals under the *Conservation Authorities Act*. Planning and Development Services consists of the following program areas:

- Development Planning
- Permitting and Enforcement

Operating and Capital Split



Revenue Source



Expenditure Type



Development Planning <<<

The Development Planning program works to protect the natural environment and build healthy and resilient communities. We provide technical expertise in natural heritage, hydrogeology, engineering, and stormwater management. We also deliver proactive and innovative guidance through our review of development applications on stormwater management, environmental compliance approvals for stormwater, groundwater recharge and phosphorus loading. Our goal is to influence sustainable development that protects natural heritage features, drinking water and directs development away from natural hazard areas.

2023 Focus

- Continue to collaborate with municipal partners to identify practices to ensure timely approvals of *Planning Act* applications

Fast Facts

- Received 1026 applications made under the *Planning Act*
- Reviewed 305 hydrogeology submissions
- Reviewed 474 Natural Heritage submissions, including Environmental Impact Studies, Natural Heritage Evaluations, Tree Inventory and Protection Plans, Planting/Restoration Plans, and submissions in support of permit applications
- Attended 83 site visits to delineate natural heritage features and determine development limits
- Reviewed 581 engineering submissions in support of *Planning Act*, Environmental Compliance Approval, and permit applications
- Provided 363 pre-consultation responses on concept submissions

- Provide technical education sessions to industry partners on watershed planning.
- Create a Planning and Development Procedural Manual to provide guidance to industry partners in the preparation of submission materials
- Create standards and checklists for digital submissions to ensure streamlined reviews and consistent submission
- Review and update our Planning Memorandums of Understanding based on Municipal needs and changes resulting from Provincial legislation (Bill 108, Bill 23)

Outlook

- The Lake Simcoe watershed continues to see extensive growth pressure requiring staff to address the balance of growth, community, and environment. Engaging with our municipal and development

industry partners continues to be a key focus to increase efficiencies, reduce timelines and embrace moving to digital submissions. Various legislative changes are creating uncertainty around roles and responsibilities

Service Pressures

- Maintaining a high caliber of client service and balanced fees can be challenging due to constant fluctuations in the housing market
- Reduction in timelines for Municipal plan review will impact Conservation Authority review timeframes
- Quality of technical submissions continues to decline, increasing the amount of staff time required to review applications, which is compounded by reduced approval timelines in the *Planning Act*

2022 Achievements

- Continued to improve our submission pre-screening and technical walk-through processes to help streamline application reviews
- Prepared and delivered webinars to over 200 attendees, providing information on environmental standards and requirements related to hydrological assessments and storm water management, further streamlining the approval process
- Assisted local municipal partners with comprehensive updates to municipal Official Plan, Secondary Plan and Zoning Bylaw documents



Fast Facts

- Reviewed 1180 regulation applications and issued 808 permits under Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*
- Responded to 2409 general inquiries from the public.
- Responded to 350 complaints about potential unauthorized development
- Were successful in obtaining guilty convictions on two court cases (15 counts of illegal development) resulting in subsequent probation and restoration orders

Permitting and Enforcement ◀◀

The Permitting and Enforcement program is responsible for implementing and enforcing the legislation within Ontario Regulation 179/06 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*. This legislation specifies that our permission is required prior to undertaking development within lands identified as hazard lands*. The goal of regulating development within hazard lands is to reduce loss of life, property damage and social disruption.

*Hazard lands has a very distinct definition within the legislation. For ease of understanding, we generally refer to hazard lands as those that are susceptible to flooding, erosion, have unstable soils, watercourses, wetlands or adjacent to wetlands.

2023 Focus

- Continue to implement client service improvement strategies, including tracking customer service surveys
- Further streamline our permit approvals process including digital approvals and online payments
- Continue to update the regulation mapping including pending updates from the 2022 shoreline hazard study
- Work with external clients (e.g., Real Estate Council of Ontario) to create course content to educate students and realtors on the role and responsibilities of Conservation Authorities, and how our work may impact their homebuying clients

Outlook

- Continued growth in the watershed is driving a corresponding increase in the volume of regulations related activity (applications, violations). To address this growth, we continue to look for ways to create more efficiencies in our processes and prioritize our efforts on areas of most environmental concern

Service Pressures

- Uncertainty around existing future legislated and regulatory changes
- Significant housing demands creates pressure to identify suitable lands for development including marginal lands
- An increase in the complexity of files, combined with reduced timelines for review

2022 Achievements

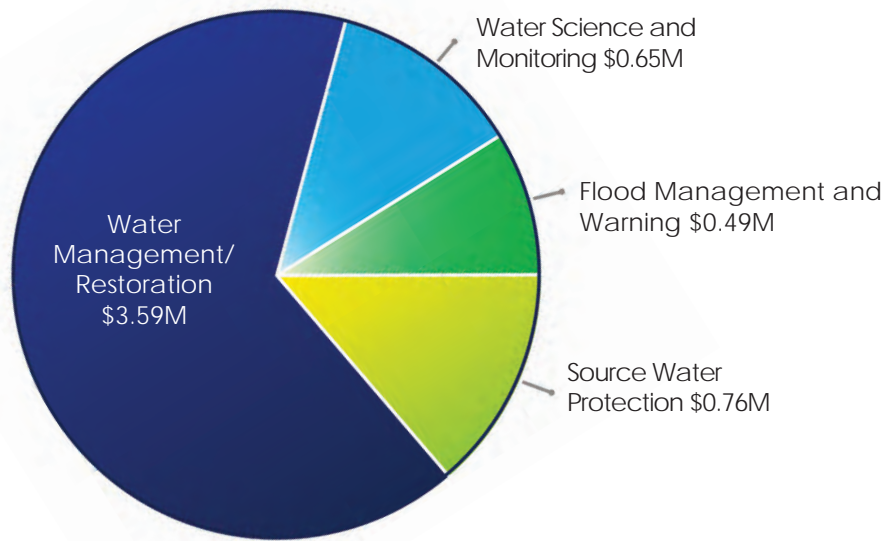
- Met 92% of the timelines under Conservation Authority Liaison Committee standards
- Reviewed and commented on 16 Environmental Assessments
- Obtained approval and implemented our compliance and enforcement procedural manual and decision matrix to support how we prioritize enforcement files
- Launched our online complaint form and associated webpage update including FAQs for typical complaints
- Facilitated three sessions for realtors, highlighting our role in development approvals and requirements in regulated areas



Water Risk Management



2023 Water Risk Management Budget \$5.49M, 9.9FTEs



The goal of Water Risk Management is to ensure that we have a safe, clean and adequate supply of drinking water, to undertake restoration projects to protect and manage water and to engage in research activities to inform decision making. Water Risk Management consists of the following program areas:

- Flood Management and Warning
- Source Water Protection
- Water Management/Restoration
- Water Science and Monitoring

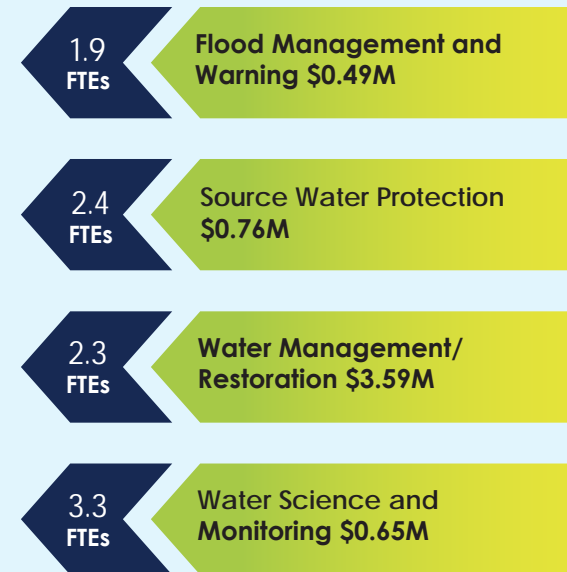
Operating and Capital Split



Revenue Source



Expenditure Type





Fast Facts

- Issued 7 riverine flood messages and 1 shoreline hazard message
- Monitored 14 stream flow gauges, 5 precipitation gauges and 8 snow survey sites
- Hosted a flood meeting of all Greater Toronto Area Conservation Authorities to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing

2022 Achievements

- Initiated and substantially completed work on the shoreline hazard mapping study in conjunction with Baird Coastal Engineers for the Lake Simcoe shoreline.
- Worked with the Region of Durham and completed a National Disaster Mitigation Program project to prepare for future flood mapping updates.
- Worked with the Science and Monitoring business unit to identify a location for a new Lake Simcoe water level gauge

Flood Management and Warning ◀◀

The goal of the Flood Management and Warning program is to reduce the risk to people, property, and infrastructure (roads, bridges, etc.) from hazards due to flooding and to reduce social disruption.

2023 Focus

- Continue focusing on Development Plan Reviews to reduce the risk of flooding in the Lake Simcoe watershed
- Continue to monitor weather forecasts and watershed conditions to inform flood messaging and support partners and stakeholders
- Explore and adapt our role in rapidly changing stormwater management and regulatory requirements to provide innovative support to our municipal and industry partners

Outlook

- Our changing climate is creating more extreme weather events and increasing the likelihood of winter runoff flooding due to unseasonable temperatures, as well as more ice damage to our properties

Service Pressures

- Increased pressure on staff and resources due staff serving in multiple roles
- Reduced financial resources due to provincial funding reductions

Source Water Protection ◀◀◀

Ensure sustainable and safe sources of clean drinking water to residents, within the South Georgian Bay-Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region, by ensuring legislative requirements within the *Clean Water Act* and ensuring policies in the Source Protection Plan are implemented.

2023 Focus

- Continue to review and amend the source protection plan to incorporate new municipal drinking water systems, as required by Regulation 205 of the *Safe Drinking Water Act*
- Complete the review of Source Protection Plan policies, and initiate consultation on the draft updated plan, as directed by Ministerial order

Outlook

- Our legislated requirements under the *Clean Water Act* will continue to define our pivotal role as the lead Source Protection Authority; this includes supporting the Source Protection Committee and reviewing and amending the Source Protection Plan

Service Pressures

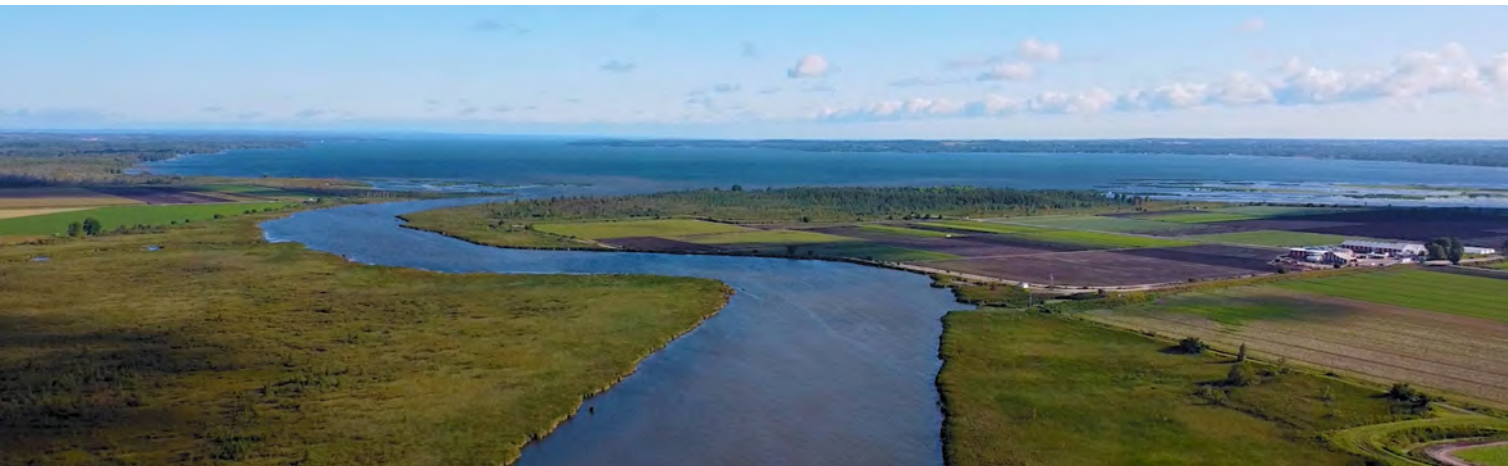
- The *Safe Drinking Water Act* requires amendments to the Source Protection Plan before any new (or expanded) municipal drinking water system can be put into use. The rate of growth and development in our source protection area will result in a significant workload for years to come
- Continued Provincial funding of this program is needed to ensure service levels are maintained and no delays occur to the approval of any new (or expanded) drinking water systems

2022 Achievements

- Completed our annual report to the Minister on plan implementation
- Coordinated with watershed municipalities to ensure new drinking water systems were added to the Source Protection Plan
- Initiated a review of Source Protection Plan policies, to ensure they remain appropriate given recent changes to Provincial policy

Fast Facts

- Over the past year, Source Protection staff have undertaken amendments to the Source Protection Plan to address proposed changes at 11 municipal drinking water systems and to address growth projections or replace aging infrastructure
- There are currently 282 municipal wells, and 16 water treatment plants in the South Georgian Bay – Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region





Water Management/Restoration ◀◀

The Water Management/Restoration program aims to improve water quality and better manage water quantity during storm events through the implementation of low impact development and innovative stormwater pond retrofits.

2023 Focus

- Continue to engage private, commercial landowners, to address large amounts of stormwater and maximize environmental benefits
- Partner with our local municipalities to complete stormwater retrofit projects
- Implement construction projects in our urban environment to address stormwater through recently finalized designs

Outlook

- We will continue to cultivate partnership opportunities with municipalities to identify, support and implement urban restoration projects, including low impact development retrofits, through in-kind work and funding through the phosphorus and water balance offsetting programs

Service Pressures

- Timing and location of offsetting payments dictates when and where projects occur
- It continues to be challenging to find public or private land suitable for stormwater related restoration projects
- Additional pressures from climate change and severe weather increase the importance of implementing urban stormwater projects

Fast Facts

- The Town of Aurora stormwater project installed 125 catch basin inserts which will improve the function of the stormwater pond ultimately improving water quality

2022 Achievements

- Partnered with the Town of Aurora on a stormwater pond retrofit project to enhance the function of a stormwater pond and installed catch basin shields to help reduce phosphorus and sediment
- Completed two stormwater restoration designs in Bradford and Innisfil to reduce a significant amount of stormwater runoff and contaminants
- Continued partnerships with the private sector on designs for parking lot retrofits in Barrie and Newmarket

Water Science and Monitoring ◀◀

The Water Science and Monitoring program is essential to informing our understanding of watershed processes, identifying emerging issues, and documenting environmental trends. This information is used to allow us to adapt our management activities to achieve our mission of a healthy Lake Simcoe and watershed.

2023 Focus

- Conduct performance monitoring of a stormwater facility that has been retrofitted from a dry pond to incorporate a large infiltration chamber
- Work with municipal partners to complete Consolidated Linear ECA receiver monitoring pilot and develop an implementation strategy for interested municipalities
- Install new lake level gauge at Beaverton Pier to support flood forecasting and lake water balance calculations
- Continue to operate and maintain 14 stream flow monitoring stations, 5 weather stations and 11 groundwater monitoring stations

Service Pressures

- Challenges around predictability and certainty of project-specific funding agreements with municipal and provincial partners

Outlook

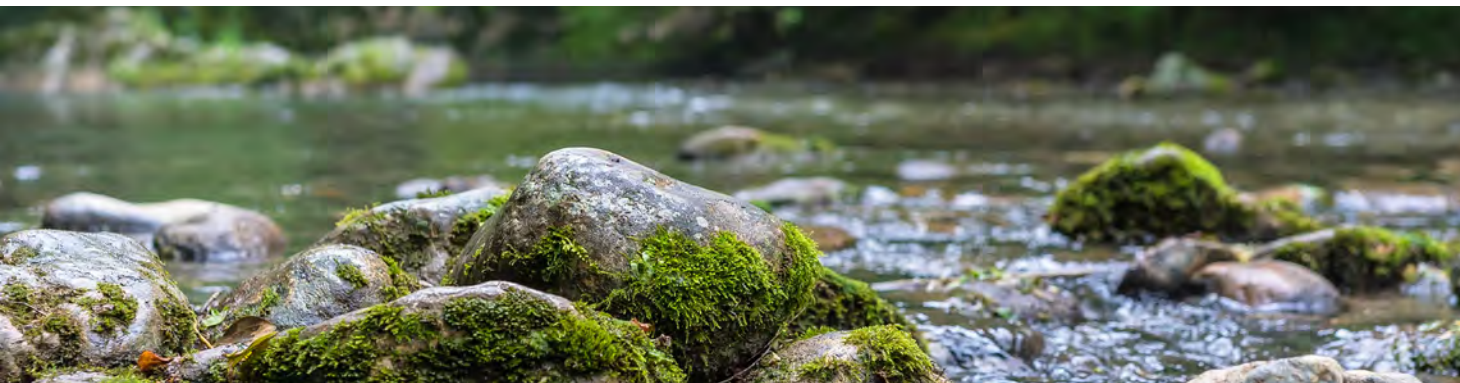
- Our stream flow monitoring network will continue to play a key role in the detection and assessment of local climate change impacts. With extreme weather events predicted to increase, the network is being positioned to play a greater role in helping us to know how to respond to such events
- Activities under stormwater performance monitoring continue to grow, with an increased focus on low impact development and research, to improve our understanding of stormwater runoff impacts and treatment

Fast Facts

- Our stream flow monitoring stations collect a data point every 5 minutes and the network of 14 stations generates almost 1.5 million points of data annually

2022 Achievements

- Continued a two-year study measuring phosphorus loading from three urban residential catchments of different ages
- Completed three years of performance monitoring of a Low Impact Development retrofit, including an exfiltration system, bioswale and permeable pavement
- Upgraded and relocated two stream flow gauges, Tannery Creek in Aurora and North Schomberg in Bradford West Gwillimbury and installed a permanent gauge on the Talbot River near Gamebridge
- Initiated a pilot project to develop a receiver monitoring program that would support the requirement under the new Consolidated Linear ECA for municipal stormwater infrastructure to assist municipal partners in meeting the requirement

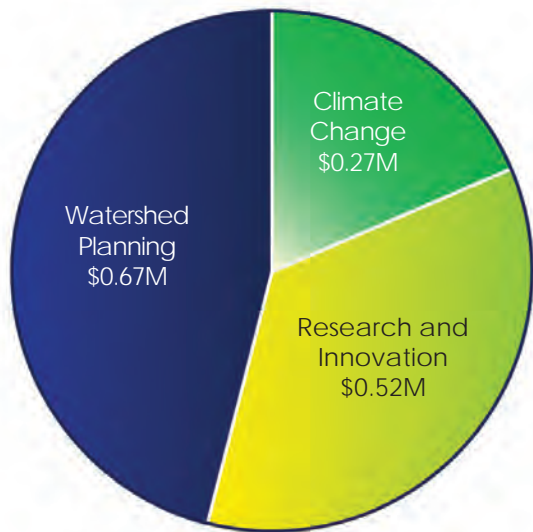




Watershed Studies & Strategies



2023 Watershed Studies & Strategies Budget \$1.45M, 7.4 FTEs



Watershed Studies and Strategies focuses on conducting research and science to inform the decisions that we make regarding our policies, regulations and restoration works. Watershed Studies and Strategies consists of the following program areas:

- Climate Change
- Research and Innovation
- Watershed Planning

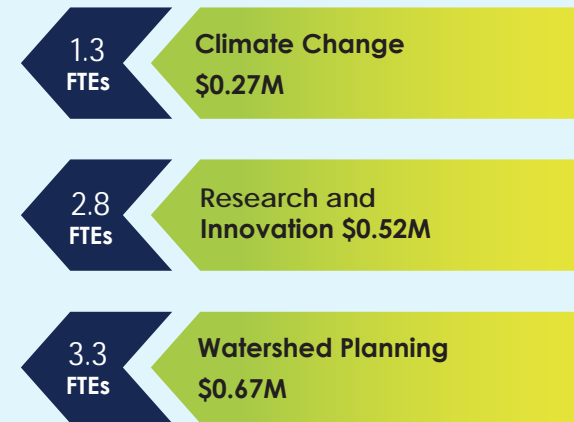
Operating and Capital Split



Revenue Source



Expenditure Type





Fast Facts

- Without significant action to reduce and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions, average temperatures in the Lake Simcoe watershed are predicted to increase by 5 degrees Celsius by 2080
- Roughly 20% of the carbon emitted in the watershed each year is sequestered by existing forests and wetlands in the Lake Simcoe watershed

Climate Change ◀◀

The Climate Change program aims to ensure the resilience of communities, water resources and natural heritage systems, within the Lake Simcoe watershed, to climate risk. Our actions and desired outcomes are directed by our climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

2023 Focus

- Continue to build understanding of the role of natural assets and habitat restoration projects in carbon sequestration, including their contribution to meeting municipal net-zero goals
- Continue a review of the impacts that climate change has/will have on the delivery of our conservation authority programs and services
- Incorporate climate change predictions in subwatershed planning processes
- Establish our leadership role in guiding, advising, and supporting municipal climate change working groups

Outlook

- Our Climate Change strategies and implementation plans have put us in a strong position to lead climate change adaptation and mitigation within the watershed

Service Pressures

- Climate change continues to be an area of significant concern. Many watershed municipalities have declared climate emergencies and/or have set net zero targets for their communities. We will continue to play an important role in helping municipalities achieve these necessary and ambitious targets

2022 Achievements

- Developed a guidance document on estimating carbon sequestration rates in natural assets, in partnership with TRCA and CVC
- Continued our webinar series on climate adaptation at a municipal / watershed-scale to assist watershed municipalities with planning and responding to climate change.
- Supported numerous climate change working groups and committees to ensure collaboration with municipal, non-governmental and other partners
- Half of the action items identified in our Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies are completed or in progress

2022 Achievements

- Completed an implementation plan to support system-wide stormwater management optimization planning within the East Holland River subwatershed
- Enhanced the Lake Simcoe watershed municipal stormwater management database, to track facility locations, types, and relevant components for assessment to improve inspection and maintenance of stormwater facilities
- Developed a Lake Simcoe watershed municipal stormwater management database user guide for inspection and maintenance programs
- Led four municipal working group sessions to support improved low impact development inspection and maintenance planning and execution
- Delivered three full-day courses to municipal and industry practitioners on sustainable infrastructure, low impact development and climate resilience
- Delivered year-three of a fee-for-service stormwater management facilities inspection and maintenance pilot program

Research and Innovation

Research and Innovation supports and advances management approaches to mitigate human activities that negatively impact the health and quality of Lake Simcoe and its watershed. These approaches must be outcome oriented, cost-effective, easy to implement and transferrable.

2023 Focus

- Begin implementation of the East Holland River system-wide stormwater management optimization
- Complete inventory and maintenance records in the Lake Simcoe watershed municipal stormwater management database
- Develop and deliver training to support municipal low impact development inspection and maintenance activities using best practices
- Develop and deliver stormwater management inspection and maintenance training to municipal staff
- Continue York Region low impact development co-benefits feasibility study, associated research, and practitioner training sessions

Outlook

- Stormwater management research and innovation will help position and inform municipalities as they transition to a holistic approach to stormwater management and compliance
- The economic and environmental benefits of subwatershed scale stormwater management provide solid rationale for shared, collaborative municipal stormwater management planning

Service Pressures

- Finding sustainable external funding to support continued innovations
- Ongoing regulatory changes for municipal stormwater management

Fast Facts

- Provided inspection and maintenance training to 150+ municipal staff and other stormwater professionals
- We performed stormwater management inspection and maintenance services for 70 stormwater management facilities
- The Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program Low Impact Development Treatment Train Tool was downloaded 520 times and the Low Impact Development Wiki Guide had 35,819 users in 2022



Fast Facts

- A recent update to our land cover map, intended to inform subwatershed plan updates, shows that natural heritage cover in the Lake Simcoe watershed increased from 43.6% to 44.4% between 2003 and 2018

2022 Achievements

- Continued to coordinate implementation of subwatershed plan recommendations with partners
- Participated in regional and local municipal comprehensive reviews of Official Plans to ensure consistency with subwatershed plans
- Continued the process of modernizing the subwatershed planning program to make it more responsive to new data and municipal planning needs, and to ensure that climate change impact planning is conducted at a subwatershed level
- Began the process of setting subwatershed-scale objectives and targets for watershed health, to guide future subwatershed plan recommendations

Watershed Planning

Watershed Planning involves identifying stressors affecting watershed health, selecting preferred solutions to address these impacts, and then monitoring progress and adapting plans to achieve desired outcomes. Watershed planning is essential to improving the health of Lake Simcoe and the watershed and is a legislated requirement of several provincial policies, including the *Lake Simcoe Protection Act* and Plan.

2023 Focus

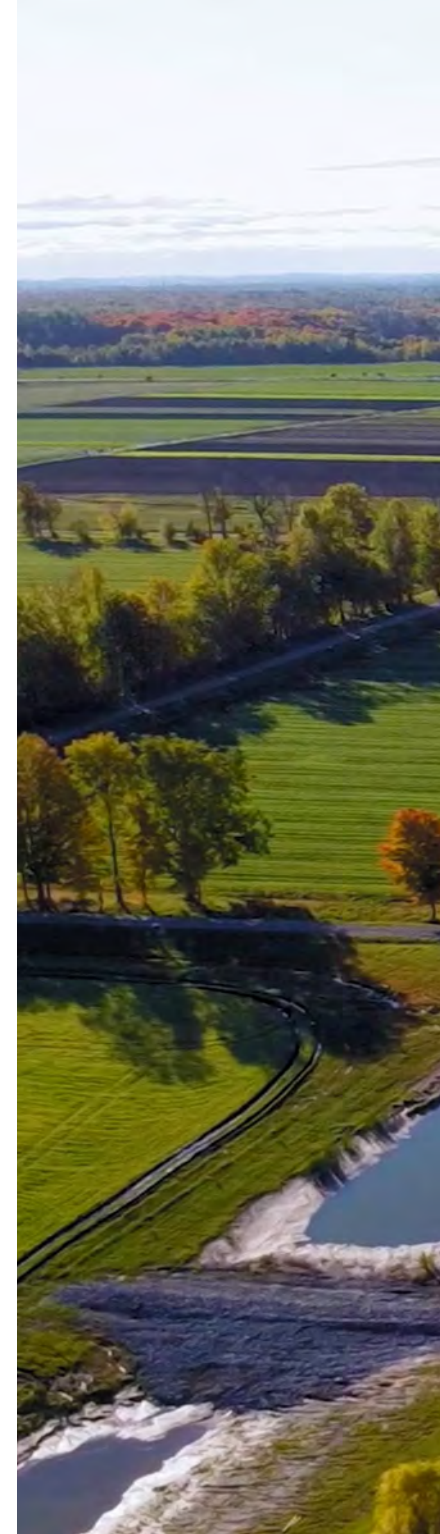
- Finalize development of an online platform and content updates needed to modernize our subwatershed plans
- Confirm environmental goals, set targets, and develop success indicators to better assess progress towards achieving subwatershed plan goals
- Support adoption of recommendations within the winter salt application discussion paper
- Incorporate climate change predictions in subwatershed plans
- Draft a Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy, one of the new provincially mandated programs and services required of Conservation Authorities

Outlook

- Under the Growth Plan and Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, many municipal land use planning and infrastructure planning documents need to be informed by watershed and subwatershed plans. As such, the watershed planning program will continue to provide an important service to member municipalities, the development industry, and continue to be a tool to translate watershed science into land use planning practice

Service Pressures

- Funding constraints limit our capacity to complete critical studies needed to update and implement modernized subwatershed plans





Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) is the leading environmental protection agency in the Lake Simcoe watershed. For over 70 years, we've been collaborating with community, government and other partners to protect and restore the environmental health and quality of Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

• 120 Bayview Parkway. Newmarket, Ontario, L3Y 3W3 •

E infomail@LSRCA.on.ca 📧 lakesimcoeconservation
 T 905-895-1281 🐦 @LSRCA
 TF 1-800-465-0437 📺 TheLSRCA
 W LSRCA.on.ca 📘 lakesimcoeconservation

If you require this document in an alternate format, please contact us at 905-895-1281.



Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation (LSCF) is the leading environmental charity in our watershed, raising funds from individuals and organizations for the critical environmental programs and projects of Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. It is one of only a few environmental charities nation-wide that has been accredited in Imagine Canada's Standards Program after demonstrating excellence in operations in the charitable sector. Contact them directly for information about how you can support their important fundraising activities.

E foundation@LSRCA.on.ca
 T 905-895-1281
 TF 1-800-465-0437
 W lakesimcoefoundation.ca

