

# Fact Sheet

## CONSERVATION ONTARIO

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Conservation Ontario is a network of 36 Conservation Authorities, local resource management agencies working on a watershed basis. Conservation Authorities protect people and their property from natural hazards of flooding and erosion; protect natural areas and open space, restore and protect aquatic and natural habitats; and provide recreational and educational opportunities to local residents.

More than 11 million people, approximately 90 per cent of Ontario's population live in the watersheds managed by Conservation Authorities.

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## Conservation Authorities

- are governed by a board of municipally appointed members, the majority of whom are also elected municipal councilors.
- provide science-based advice and services within their watersheds, including input and review to municipal Official Plans and planning processes to the majority of Ontario's municipalities.
- are funded primarily through self generated revenues (42%) and municipal levies (33%). Additional sources of funding for Conservation Authorities include municipal special projects (6%), provincial grants & special projects (17%) and federal grants or contracts (2%).

## Programs and Services

- Conservation Authorities deliver programs and services totaling more than \$254M annually through nearly 3,000 full time and seasonal, part time staff.
- Conservation Authorities have a strong track record of partnering with municipal, provincial and federal governments, as well as landowners and other groups, to deliver community based practical solutions to a range of natural resource challenges.

### *Landholdings*

- Conservation Authorities are significant landowners in the province. Collectively, they **own approximately 144,000 hectares**, including forests, wetlands, areas of natural & scientific interest, recreational lands, natural heritage and cultural sites as well as land for flood and erosion control.

### *Resource Management & Watershed Stewardship*

- The goal of Conservation Authority Watershed Stewardship programs is to protect and improve the health of our watersheds in Ontario through cooperative projects with local landowners.
  - In 2007, Conservation Authorities planted 1.8 million trees with 1,044 landowners.
- Water quality improvement initiatives assist and encourage landowners to implement best management practices on their property in order to protect and improve water quality.

- **\$4.9M dollars in grants were provided to landowners to carry out 924 water quality improvement projects in 2007.** This includes projects such as erosion control, clean water diversion, agricultural best management practices, well decommissioning and land acquisition. **As well, 217 landowners were provided with \$1.2M in grants to carry out 342 habitat rehabilitation/restoration projects.** A total of 206 hectares and 64 km of streams
- Conservation Authorities also work with municipalities and the province to manage low water conditions, participating in local low water response committees and issuing status reports on low water conditions to local communities.
  - As of 2007, a total of 20 Low Water Strategies are in place by Conservation Authorities to manage low water conditions.

#### *Monitoring the Health of our Watersheds*

- Conservation Authorities operate **419 monitoring sites** within the **provincial groundwater quality monitoring network** and **374 sites** in the **provincial surface water quality monitoring network**.
- In addition, 25 Conservation Authorities undertake biological monitoring and 19 Conservation Authorities undertake fish monitoring. Monitoring of benthic invertebrates is carried out at 1,067 locations.

#### *Source Water Protection*

- In partnership with the Province, Conservation Authorities coordinate Source Protection Committees (SPCs) in 19 regions and provide technical support to this initiative through 120 Conservation Authority staff specialists.
- Conservation Authorities have undertaken early work to characterize watersheds and complete water budgets which will provide the SPCs with an initial understanding of our watershed issues.
- Conservation Authorities have partnered with their municipalities to complete technical studies on municipal drinking water systems including delineation of intake protection zones and wellhead protection areas.

#### *Recreation*

- Over 400 Conservation Areas are managed and owned by Conservation Authorities.
- 8,130 campsites and just over 1,700 km of trails are located within Conservation Areas.
- **5.2 million people visited Conservation Areas in 2007** either as day visitors or campers.

#### *Education*

- Conservation Authority outdoor education programs are aligned with Ontario's curriculum Programs are delivered to 430,000 Ontario students at over 2,000 schools for \$6 per student. A total of 32 Conservation Authorities participate in water festivals as part of their outdoor education programs.

#### Spokespersons

Dick Hibma, Chair      Don Pearson, General Manager

#### Conservation Ontario

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