

Medway Creek & North Kettle Creek Priority Watershed Projects



Over the next three years, the UTRCA will target the implementation of agricultural best management practices (BMPs) in the Medway Creek and North Kettle Creek watersheds. The objective of the project is to evaluate the effectiveness of these stewardship efforts on soil health and water quality. Emphasis will be placed on edge-of-field losses of soil and nutrients, particularly phosphorus. Four other Conservation Authorities

are involved in this Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair and southeast Lake Huron shoreline project.

It is hoped that these efforts help to identify priority actions to improve soil health, reduce soil and nutrient loss, and improve pollinator health. We can also find ways to reduce water quality risks while improving resiliency to extreme weather events.

The project is being carried out through funding from and under the auspices of the Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association. Go to <http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/oscia-programs/glasi/priority-subwatershed-project/> for more information.

Contact: Brad Glasman, Manager, Conservation Services

Weldon Farm Stream Enhancement

Just south of Birr in the Municipality of Middlesex Centre, another 1 kilometre stretch of Medway Creek has been improved for wildlife while protecting water quality. The activities included creating spawning riffles, narrowing the stream to improve flow patterns, and installing wooden cover structures to provide fish refuge areas.

Over 300 students from several schools planted approximately 1000 trees and shrubs to create woody buffers. Western University students helped to install live stakes (bioengineering) along the stream through most of this property. Other participants included the Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry's (MNRF) Stewardship Youth Rangers and the Friends of Medway Creek.



UTRCA staff worked with MNRF Stewardship Youth Rangers to install wooden cover structures along Medway Creek.

The World Wildlife Fund Canada through the Loblaw Water Fund, MNRF, Environment Canada, London Community Foundation and Middlesex Stewardship Council all contributed funding to this effort.

Contact: Brad Glasman, Manager, Conservation Services

Great Lakes Agricultural Stewardship Initiative Outreach & Education Project

Over the next few months, UTRCA staff will be producing five case studies to represent the successful implementation of agricultural best management practices, including:

- Field windbreaks
- Cover crops
- Erosion control structures
- Fragile land retirement
- Buffer strips

The case studies will be published electronically and include photographs, video links, landowner testimonials and project details. The project is being carried out through funding from and under the auspices of the Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association.

Contact: Brad Glasman, Manager, Conservation Services



Small wetlands, such as this one restored within a natural wet area in a farm field, offer excellent wildlife habitat and water quality and quantity benefits.

Wetlands Restoration Funding

Together with the Kettle Creek Conservation Authority, over \$50,000 each year for three years has been secured to cost-share the implementation of wetland projects. Funding is also available for wetlands education programs to engage school students in the projects or through in-class teaching.

Contact: Brad Glasman, Manager, Conservation Services

The CWP is a collaborative project between municipalities and local Conservation Authorities aimed at encouraging projects that improve and protect local water quality.

Contact: Craig Merkley, Conservation Services Specialist



UTRCA staff designed and installed a sign explaining the recreational fisheries project at the beach in Fanshawe CA.

Fanshawe Beach Signage

An interpretive sign was installed late in 2015 at the Fanshawe Beach Recreational Fisheries Project site, in Fanshawe Conservation Area. The project included an 80 metre long wood and stone underwater crib structure, submerged logs and ash tree root wads, gravel spawning beds and the planting of aquatic plants along the shoreline. Most of the work took place from July to September. The principal funder was Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Contact: Brad Glasman, Manager, Conservation Services



CWP committee members check out a drainage inlet research project on a Thorndale area farm.

Certified Crop Advisor Professional Development Day

A Soil and Water Information Day was held in Woodstock on November 24. The day was aimed at updating professionals about the latest local research and innovation results related to agricultural soil and water resources.

Two speakers from the Conservation Services Unit were asked to present on topics. Craig Merkley provided a presentation entitled 'Bio-reactors for Agricultural Applications' in which he outlined details and results of 15 years of research and demonstration work in the Thames watershed. Forester John Enright presented his observations on the value of field windbreaks on protecting soil health and increasing crop yields. The day was well attended and speakers received excellent feedback evaluations.

Contact: Craig Merkley, Conservation Services Specialist

Clean Water Program Tour

The Clean Water Program (CWP) steering committee took advantage of the good December weather to tour several unique research and demonstration projects in the watershed. Included on the tour were a controlled drainage project located on Henk van den Berg's farm in the upper Medway Creek watershed, natural channel work along the Medway through Doug Adam's farm near Birr, and a drainage inlet research project on James Verwaayne's farm near Thorndale.

Lake Erie and the UTRCA Lake Erie Student Conferences

The UTRCA has been providing support and assistance to provincial and federal agencies for over 20 years as they work to restore and protect the health of Lake Erie. In 2015, the UTRCA's Community Partnership unit was involved in two important initiatives. At the request of the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC), and with assistance from other Conservation Authorities (CAs), the UTRCA hosted two Lake Erie Student Conferences. The first was held in Port Dover in May, and the second in Port Stanley in October. Both conferences accommodated close to 100 grade 11 and 12 students.



Students talked with a Lake Erie commercial fisherman.

The MOECC interest is in improving Great Lakes literacy. The CAs are interested in making the connection between activities within watersheds and the health of the Great Lakes. The conferences were designed to create an opportunity for the students and teachers to learn about and make connections to Lake Erie. Themes included: The Value of Lake Erie to our Community and to our Local Economy, Issues Facing Lake Erie, and A Call to Personal Action. Highlights included a visit with a commercial fisherman and his vessel, panel presentations from municipal tourism and economic development staff, hands-on water quality sessions, and citizen science training with Bird Studies Canada.

The conferences created new relationships amongst the CAs, MOECC and Ministry of Education representatives, and Board of Education staff. As a result of the conferences, the UTRCA and other CAs are now offering additional education opportunities specifically for Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) students including a new element of the SHSM certificate program: Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship (I.C.E.) Training.

Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair Binational Public Forum / Thames Basin Phosphorus Reduction

On behalf of the Conservation Authorities in the Lake Erie basin, the UTRCA has been providing Canadian facilitation support for the Lake Erie Binational Public Forum since 1995. The Forum is a group of individuals from Canada and the U.S. formed to promote and achieve effective Lake Erie basin-wide implementation of the Lake Erie Lakewide Action and Management Plan. In November, a Forum meeting was held in Leamington to provide updates on activities related to the Great Lake Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) Annex 2 (Lakewide Management) and Annex 4 (Nutrients).

GLWQA Annex 4 commits Environment Canada and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to develop objectives for Lake Erie phosphorus concentrations and loading targets by February 2016. It also commits federal government agencies to develop phosphorus reduction strategies and domestic action plans by 2018.

Ontario and the states of Ohio and Michigan have reached an agreement to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the western basin of Lake Erie by 40 per cent. The Thames watershed has been identified as a priority watershed for phosphorus reduction in Ontario and is quickly becoming a focus for this ambitious target.

Contact: Teresa Hollingsworth, Manager, Community & Corporate Services

On the Agenda

The next UTRCA Board of Directors meeting will be January 26, 2016. Agendas and approved board meeting minutes are posted at www.thamesriver.on.ca; click on "Publications."

- 2016 Budget Municipal Feedback
- Environmental Planning and Regulations Fee Schedule
- Administration and Enforcement – Section 28
- Tender Award - Wildwood Gantry Refurbishment
- Tender Release - Fanshawe Dam Substation Renewal and Emergency Generator Connection
- Springbank Dam Update
- Annual Meeting Details

Contact: Susan Shivas, Executive Assistant



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