

Board of Directors

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority



Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Board of Directors'
Meeting Agenda
Tuesday September 27, 2022 at 9:30 A.M
Virtual Meeting due to COVID-19 Pandemic

1. Territorial Acknowledgement

2. Modifications to the Agenda

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

4. Presentations/Delegations

5. Administrative Business

5.1. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: Tuesday August 23, 2022

Mover: M.Lupton

Seconder: N.Manning

THAT that the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Board of Directors approve the Board of Directors' minutes dated August 23, 2022, including any closed session minutes, as posted on the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority web-site.

5.2. Business Arising from Minutes

5.3. Correspondence

5.3.1. Correspondence from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Mover: H.McDermid

Seconder: P.Mitchell

THAT the Board of Directors receives the correspondence for information.

6. Reports – For Consideration

- 6.1. 2023 Draft Budget Concepts Memo
T.Annett/C.Saracino - Admin #4598
Mover: A.Murray
Seconder: B.Petrie
THAT the Board of Directors approve the recommendations as presented in the report.
- 6.2. Strathroy-Caradoc Boundary Adjustment/Enlargement
T.Annett – Admin # 4601
Mover: J.Reffle
Seconder: J.Salter
THAT the Board of Directors approve the recommendation as presented in the report.
- 6.3. Quarterly Progress Report #2 – Inventory of Programs and Services
T.Annett – # 4595
Mover: M.Blosh
Seconder: A.Hopkins
THAT the Board of Directors approve the recommendation as presented in the report.

7. Reports – For Information

- 7.1. Administration and Enforcement – Section 28 Status Report
J.Allain – ENVP # 12432
Mover: M.Schadenberg
Seconder: A.Westman
THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.
- 7.2. Organization Modernization Overview
T.Annett – Admin #4599
Mover: T.Jackson
Seconder: M.Lupton
THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.
- 7.3. August For Your Information Report
Mover: N.Manning
Seconder: H.McDermid
THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

8. Notices of Motion

9. Chair's Comments

10. Member's Comments

11. General Manager's Comments

12. Reports – In Camera

13. Adjournment

Mover: P.Mitchell

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tracy Annett", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tracy Annett, General Manager

Tracy Annett - EXTERNAL An update concerning Conservation Authority Act governance

From: "Keyes, Jennifer (MNRF)" <jennifer.keyes@ontario.ca>
To: "Keyes, Jennifer (MNRF)" <jennifer.keyes@ontario.ca>
Date: 8/30/2022 4:47 PM
Subject: EXTERNAL An update concerning Conservation Authority Act governance
CC: "Corrigal, Kirsten (MECP)" <kirsten.corrigal@ontario.ca>, "ca.office(MEC...
BC: Tracy Annett

Dear Conservation Authority Partners and Interested Parties,

Through new Orders-In-Council made pursuant to the *Executive Council Act* that were approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council yesterday, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) has been designated as the Ministry responsible for administering the *Conservation Authorities Act* (CAA). Moving forward, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) no longer has duties, functions or responsibilities under the CAA.

Since 2018, MECP led significant legislative and regulatory changes to the CAA to improve the governance, oversight, transparency and accountability of conservation authorities.

MECP will continue to support MNRF during this transition to ensure it is seamless for staff, the public, municipalities, conservation authorities and other partners.

Stakeholders can continue to reach out to the Conservation Authority Office (via ca.office@ontario.ca) as they have done in the past on conservation authority matters.

We thank you for your ongoing support during this time of transition. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Keyes
Director
Resources Planning and Development Policy Branch
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Tracy Annett, General Manager
Date: September 16, 2022
Filename: Admin #4598
Agenda #: 6.1
Subject: 2023 Draft Budget Concepts Memo

Recommendation

That the Board of Directors approves the following recommendations as guidance for staff development of the 2023 Draft Budget:

1. That the 2023 Draft Budget reflects a maintenance level of service delivery except where funding is received from sources other than levy.
2. That an inflationary increase of 5% on most costs be included.
3. That the final \$172,500 municipal levy request in support of the Environmental Targets Strategic Plan be deferred until 2024.

Introduction

This budget recommendation focuses on immediate financial challenges in response to increasing costs due to inflation. Furthermore, it is expected that additional administrative effort will be required to meet the Phase 1 Regulatory Requirements of the Conservation Authorities Act, at the expense of the organization's long-term strategic goals.

Discussion

Staff are seeking high level budget direction from the Board as guidance for the 2023 draft budget's development. This guidance is not binding; the Board will review the full draft budget in November. Staff may also consider final adjustments based on feedback prior to approval at the Annual General Meeting in February. Changes are possible and expected at each stage of the budget's development and through consultation with our member municipalities. The 2023 budget will be affected by several issues and Board direction is needed. These issues are reviewed in detail below.

2023 Budget Considerations

Direct Impacts to Costs

Inflation - Recent practice has been to review the April to April Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Ontario as a **guide** for an annual inflationary increase for wages. This value for 2022 is **6.9%**. Inflation rose on average during the first seven months of 2022 for Ontario **7.2%**. Canada's August CPI is **7.0%** higher than 12 months earlier and though the Bank of Canada targets 2% as the stable inflation rate, with a range between 1% and 3%, it has indicated it is expecting and willing to allow the actual rate of inflation to float well above that for the

next year or more. As such, staff recommends estimates of inflation of 5% for most costs in the 2023 draft budget where it is otherwise not known or can be predicted more exactly.

Wages - With respect to the Compensation Review Implementation, the consultant recommended that annual increases to the Salary Grid be guided by conducting a review of the comparator organizations to determine an average of their projected salary grid increases. This information, together with information relating to changes in CPI, published surveys projecting following year increases, and locally negotiated increases will inform the appropriate salary grid adjustments having regard to maintaining a sustainable compensation framework to attract and retain staff and remain a competitive organization. The average of our Conservation Authority comparators at this point is approximately 3%.

Conservation Authorities Act Regulations - Significant administrative and technical effort will be required to undertake and or update components of the regulations:

- Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy
- Conservation Authority Land Inventories
- Natural Hazards Infrastructure Operational Management Plan
- Natural Hazards Infrastructure Asset Management Plan

Complying with these regulations will entail additional costs which the province is not funding. The full extent of these impacts has not been costed and preliminary review of the regulations suggests additional capacity will be required to fulfill the requirements by December 31, 2024. Additional administrative effort will also be required to develop and negotiate MOUs/agreements for non-mandatory programs and services requiring municipal levy. The full extent of these costs to meet the requirements of the Phase 1 Regulations will be refined in the coming months, with Conservation Ontario information sessions scheduled for October 13th.

Impacts to Funding

Fees Review – As we further refine our mandatory and non-mandatory program components, a fees review will be undertaken to establish appropriate revenues to meet service delivery needs.

Municipal Funding –Typically staff recommend a municipal levy increase that balances program needs with public support. For 2023 staff suggest that municipal levy needs will be based on maintaining service levels, but inflation will impact costs and therefore levy. The following is also considered context for any municipal levy increase:

- City of London approved a 2.0% levy increase as part of its multi-year budget 4 years ago. Current city direction is that all civic service areas and agencies, boards and commissions will be required to remain within their 2023 operating budget allocation approved during the 2020 to 2023 Multi-Year Budget.
- Due to previous budget decisions by the board to reduce the levy requests and changes in Current Value Assessment (CVA) over 4 years, a 2% levy increase to the City for 2023 represents a 5.3% levy increase on average for all member municipalities.

- Consistent messages from municipal staff have emphasized maintenance budgets with minimal levy increase as political interest is to minimize increases for rate payers. The same approach will be expected from Boards and Commissions.
- Municipal Property Assessment will be updated in 2023. Many conservation authorities request larger increases when municipalities receive tax assessment increases.
- This will be the final year conservation authorities may levy for the full range of current services. Amendments to the CA Act separate our services into mandatory and non-mandatory programs. Negotiated agreements will be required for non-mandatory services with municipalities deciding if they want or are willing to pay for those services.
- Alternative funding sources will be needed for non-mandatory programs to continue. This support and long term agreements may be jeopardized by an aggressive UTRCA 2023 budget that conflicts with current municipal interests and financial priorities.

Given the above, staff recommend that the 2023 Draft Budget reflects a maintenance level of service delivery except where funding is received from sources other than levy. Overall budget costs are expected to increase (inflation, insurance, CPP costs, etc.) however no service growth will be planned. To support the one-time transition costs imposed by provincial regulation it is proposed to consume unrestricted reserves rather than increase general levy.

Other Budget Concerns

Environmental Targets Strategic Plan- Staff again recommend deferral of the final \$172,500 in Environmental Targets funding until 2024. This recommendation is also made with the understanding that future funding for some elements of Environmental Targets may be through negotiated municipal agreements as required in Regulation, rather than general levy funding.

Asset Management Planning - Asset Management Planning efforts have been initiated with four key staff enrolled in the Asset Management Association of Canada program for Asset Management professional certification funded in part by the federal government. The 2023 budget will include the cost associated with hiring a consultant as an advisor to help us complete our Asset Management Plan.

Capital Projects - Work will proceed in 2023 for capital projects. Previously deferred capital spending will need to take place in order to continue to deliver programs. Vehicles in particular will need to be replaced as acquisition has been challenging due to supply chain issues. We anticipate the number of vehicle purchases in 2023 to be five. As vehicles are becoming challenging to acquire we are exploring alternative ways of managing fleet capital needs.

Section 39 Hazard Management Provincial Transfer Payment - Funding is assumed to be status quo for 2023. An email from MNRF on September 15th indicated that ministry staff are currently finalizing the agreements for 2022/2023 provincial fiscal funding.

Insurance – We expect insurance costs to increase, but perhaps not to the same level as we have experienced recently. Nevertheless, insurance increases will be higher than the current rate of inflation and may average 12% higher in 2023 than 2022. A comprehensive insurance review begins on the 28th of September to seek ways to mitigate extreme increases.

Questica Budget Tool – We are currently implementing a new planning tool and it will be used to assist us in preparing our 2023 budget. Between October and December all senior staff will begin to use the new tool to help us forecast budget needs with much more clarity and accuracy. Staff will phase-in expansion of the tool to add more forecast years, appropriations for capital spending, and an approval process for different levels of review. As provincial regulations become fully entrenched we will slowly move our budget document to an updated format, but for now it will continue to present similarly to the 2022 format for comparative purposes.

CVA - The provincial funding formula that apportions levy across member municipalities will change again in 2023. The formula uses MPAC’s Current Value Assessment of municipal properties within each Conservation Authority’s jurisdiction to calculate proportional costs. 2023 changes to CVA apportionment are less dramatic than in previous years but continue to reflect rising values for rural lands. The levy apportionment data provided by the province for our watershed is attached.

2023 Budget Development Schedule

September 2022: Board Direction regarding Budget Concepts

November 2022: Draft Budget Board Presentation

November- February 2023: Municipal Input sessions with Senior Staff & Draft Budget circulation to member municipalities for comment

January 2023: Board review of municipal comments and budget reconsideration

February 2023: Budget review and approval

Summary

Staff have been successful at finding additional sources of revenues through contacts, service agreements and funders. Feedback to further guide overall budget preparation is requested to finalize our draft budget as we transition to our new budget framework in 2024.

Recommended & Prepared by:

Tracy Annett, General Manager

Christine Saracino, Supervisor, Finance and Accounting

Attachment: UTRCA Levy Apportionment Data for 2023

Conservation Authority	Upper Tier	Municipality	% in CA	Municipal Population	Municipal Population in CA Jurisdiction	2022 Tax Year Current Value Assessment (CVA) (Modified)	2022 Tax Year CVA (Modified) in CA Jurisdiction	CVA Based Apportionment Percentage
Upper Thames River	Huron County	South Huron M	8	8,414	673	1,862,485,584.65	148,998,847	0.2006
Upper Thames River	Middlesex County	London C	82	308,620	253,068	58,028,058,304.35	47,583,007,810	64.0751
Upper Thames River	Middlesex County	Lucan Biddulph Tp	32	4,359	1,395	816,293,640.00	261,213,965	0.3517
Upper Thames River	Middlesex County	Middlesex Centre M	49	15,476	7,583	3,656,532,420.40	1,791,700,886	2.4127
Upper Thames River	Middlesex County	Thames Centre M	92	11,747	10,807	2,574,729,165.45	2,368,750,832	3.1897
Upper Thames River	Oxford County	Blandford-Blenheim Tp	12	6,405	769	1,468,317,345.00	176,198,081	0.2373
Upper Thames River	Oxford County	East Zorra-Tavistock Tp	89	6,218	5,534	1,405,091,082.50	1,250,531,063	1.6840
Upper Thames River	Oxford County	Ingersoll T	100	10,328	10,328	1,794,980,259.00	1,794,980,259	2.4171
Upper Thames River	Oxford County	Norwich Tp	13	8,445	1,098	1,700,977,301.00	221,127,049	0.2978
Upper Thames River	Oxford County	South-West Oxford Tp	62	5,788	3,589	1,253,152,275.75	776,954,411	1.0462
Upper Thames River	Oxford County	Woodstock C	100	32,615	32,615	6,512,730,579.05	6,512,730,579	8.7700
Upper Thames River	Oxford County	Zorra Tp	100	7,053	7,053	1,824,533,064.95	1,824,533,065	2.4569
Upper Thames River	Perth County	Perth East Tp	51	9,596	4,894	2,078,521,740.95	1,060,046,088	1.4275
Upper Thames River	Perth County	Perth South Tp	98	3,346	3,279	925,633,344.55	907,120,678	1.2215
Upper Thames River	Perth County	St. Marys T	100	6,254	6,254	1,087,493,330.00	1,087,493,330	1.4644
Upper Thames River	Perth County	Stratford C	100	26,328	26,328	5,394,887,744.15	5,394,887,744	7.2647
Upper Thames River	Perth County	West Perth M	67	7,509	5,031	1,643,391,111.85	1,101,072,045	1.4827
				478,501	380,298		74,261,346,732	100

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Tracy Annett, General Manager
Date: September 16, 2022
Filename: Admin #4601
Agenda #: 6.2
Subject: Strathroy-Caradoc Boundary Adjustment/Enlargement

Recommendation

That the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the proposed boundary adjustment between the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority and the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc. It is recognized that this adjustment will result in the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc becoming a participating member of the UTRCA with representation on the Board of Directors.

Introduction

In January 2016, the Board of Directors approved the boundary adjustment for the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc to become a member. Resolutions from both the Municipality and the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority were also received. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry advised against undertaking boundary adjustments while significant changes to the Conservation Authorities Act were underway. The only changes not yet proclaimed are limited to Section 28 and the municipality wishes to proceed.

To facilitate a successful outcome to this process it would be useful for the UTRCA Board to also pass the supporting resolution presented above.

Discussion

Staff began discussions to re-initiate the enlargement once the Mandatory Programs and Services Regulations was enacted. Municipal staff provided the attached report to Council at their meeting on September 6, 2022. Council approved the following:

RECOMMENDATION: THAT: Council receives Report BBP-2022-107; and further, THAT: Council approve the proposed boundary adjustment and directs municipal staff to initiate the process to amend the boundary between the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority with the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks.

Since writing this report our oversight ministry has changed through new Orders-In-Council made pursuant to the Executive Council Act. "Ministry" was defined to allow for the administration of the Conservation Authorities Act to change, as below.

“Minister” means the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks or such other member of the Executive Council as may be assigned the administration of this Act under the Executive Council Act; (“ministre”)

Summary

The advantage of this boundary adjustment is to provide greater clarity regarding each conservation Authorities jurisdiction, program and services and regulatory authority.

Recommended and Prepared by:
Tracy Annett, General Manager

Attachments

- 1) Report to Council UTRCA Boundary Adjustment in Strathroy-Caradoc
- 2) Upper Thames – Lower Thames Boundary (Draft)

Meeting Date: September 6, 2022
Department: Building, By-law and Planning
Report No.: BBP-2022-107
Submitted by: Jennifer Huff, Director of Building & Planning
Approved by: Fred Tranquilli, Chief Administrative Officer / Clerk
SUBJECT: **Conservation Authorities Boundary Adjustment / Enlargement**

RECOMMENDATION: THAT: Council receives Report BBP-2022-107; and further, **THAT:** Council approve the proposed boundary adjustment and directs municipal staff to initiate the process to amend the boundary between the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority with the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This matter is in accord with the following strategic priorities:

- Community Well-being: Residents of all ages in Strathroy-Caradoc will have access to community amenities and activities that are accessible and support active lifestyles and well-being.
- Growth Management: Strathroy-Caradoc will be an inclusive community where growth is managed to accommodate a range of needs and optimize municipal resources.

BACKGROUND:

A previous report to Council on November 21, 2016 recommended the boundary adjustment be initiated. Shortly after, the Conservation Authorities Act was under review and the oversight ministry changed from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks. Amendments to the Act are now proclaimed and include changes to the process for how enlargements are considered.

Both the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) and the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority (LTVCA) have historically relied on the language of the Order in Council, OC-1699/47 that created the former: "... *The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority was established, including thirty municipalities wholly or partly within the watershed of the Thames River above the confluence of Dingman's Creek with the Thames River , but not including the Townships of Caradoc,...*". Further, the easterly boundary of the LTVCA has historically been represented, on

official mapping produced and published by the Province of Ontario, as being consistent with the watershed of the Thames River below the confluence of Dingman's Creek. Consequently, that portion of the former Township of Caradoc, above the confluence, has been treated as being outside of the jurisdiction of both Conservation Authorities.

A boundary adjustment is required to provide clarity regarding the area of jurisdiction of UTRCA and the LTVCA for regulatory purposes under Section 28 of the Conservation Authorities Act; provide extension services to landowners; and apportion municipal levies that are calculated according to geographic area of a municipality.

The enclosed mapping illustrates the proposed boundary and jurisdictional expansion while ensuring the riverine flooding and erosion hazards associated with the Thames River remain within the jurisdiction of one Conservation Authority. It is proposed to adjust the westerly boundary of the UTRCA to a point which is defined by a more obvious feature. A cultural feature which would include Longwoods Road and Highway 402 is easily defined, more visible and capable of being better understood by the public. We note that LTVCA and UTRCA staff have utilized Longwoods Road as an identifiable/operational watershed divide for more than 25 years. This proposed boundary adjustment has the added advantage of maintaining the integrity of the Komoka Creek and River Bend Subwatersheds within the jurisdiction of the UTRCA.

The following services provided by the UTRCA would be available to the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc ;

1. Monitoring and enforcement of environmental information regarding; surface water quality, fisheries and benthic invertebrate data collection, and woodland conditions through the Watershed Report Card program for the Komoka Creek and River Bend Subwatersheds. The Report Cards can be found on-line at: <http://thamesriver.on.ca/watershed-health/watershed-report-cards/> .
2. Delivery of environmental programs and services through the completion of projects under the Clean Water Program, provision of extension services, and offering landowner stewardship projects.
3. Extensive reptile research and habitat improvements have occurred along this reach of the Thames River which forms the boundary between the Municipalities of Strathroy-Caradoc and Middlesex Centre.
4. In addition, the UTRCA owns land within Strathroy-Caradoc (north of Adelaide Road across from Delaware West) that includes a land management plan to enhance this significant natural heritage feature within the Municipality.

The implications for Strathroy-Caradoc include becoming a participating municipality within the UTRCA and therefore having entitlement to membership through an appointed representative. An alternative for membership would be to share an appointment with Middlesex Centre to the UTRCA. (Potentially, S-C and MC could also share an appointment to the LTVCA in the future if desired.)

COMMENTS:

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority and the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority have discussed the proposed boundary adjustment and support this change that will provide enhanced services to the Municipality.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Conservation Authority Levy Apportionments will shift from St. Clair Region Conservation Authority to the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. The financial implications are estimated to be less than \$10,000. *Mandatory Programs and Services Regulations (O. Reg. 686/21)*, made pursuant to the CAA will change the levy apportionments in order to increase consistency and transparency for all programs and services in advance of the 2024 municipal budget.

NEXT STEPS

The process to obtain approval from the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks involves several steps and are outlined in Part 3, Section 10 of the Act.

- Council approval of this report is the first step;
- The Board of Directors for both the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority notify their member municipalities of the proposed enlargement of the UTRCA's area of jurisdiction;
The Council of the municipality calls a meeting with each participating municipality in the watershed to consider the enlargement to be consistent with Section 10 (1) and 10 (1.1) of the Act;
- A resolution may be passed by a majority of at least two-thirds of the watershed's representatives at the meeting to designate the area and jurisdiction of the authority's, and;
- The Municipality that called the meeting promptly provides the Minister of Environment Conservation and Parks with a copy of the passed resolution.

ATTACHMENTS:

- BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT MAP



DRAFT

STRATHROY-CARADOC

MIDDLESEX CENTRE

UPPER THAMES RIVER
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

**UTRCA - LTVCA Boundary Amendment Map (Detail):
Proposed Boundary Adjustment**

Conservation Authority	S-C Area km ²	S-C Area %	S-C % of CA
LTVCA	82.08	29.8	2.5
UTRCA	20.98	7.6	0.6
SCRCA	172.06	62.5	4.3
Total	275.12	100	

NOTE:

- Areas calculated based on UTM NAD 83 Zone 17 geometry
- Conservation Authority boundaries based on Source Protection Region boundaries
- 2020 imagery Copyright © Queen's Printer for Ontario

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Tracy Annett, General Manager
Date: September 13, 2022
Filename: Admin # 4595
Agenda #: 6.3
Subject: Quarterly Progress Report #2 - Inventory of Programs and Services

Recommendation

THAT the Second Quarterly Progress Report be posted on the UTRCA website, and submitted to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry in accordance with Ontario Regulation 687/21.

Background

As a requirement under Ontario Regulation 687/21, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) developed and approved a Transition Plan (December 17, 2021) and Inventory of Programs and Services (February 28, 2022). The Inventory of Programs and Services is based on the three categories identified in the Regulation. These categories include (1) Mandatory, (2) Municipally requested, and (3) Other (Authority determines are advisable).

As required under Ontario Regulation 687/21 and identified in UTRCA's Transition Plan, the UTRCA is providing its second Progress Report. Under the Regulation the Progress Reports must include the following;

- Any comments or other feedback submitted by a municipality regarding the inventory
- A summary of any changes that the Authority has made to the inventory to address comments or other feedback, including a copy of the amended inventory and description of changes
- An update on the progress of negotiations on cost apportioning agreements with participating municipalities
- Any difficulties that the Authority is experiencing that might affect the ability of the Authority to enter into cost apportioning agreements with participating municipalities by the transition date.

Discussion:

Progress made since the first Report details are summarized below:

1) Municipal Comments and Feedback

- a. Generally, municipalities have no further comments on the inventory but are awaiting the draft agreements to provide comments. Discussions with other CA General Managers have indicated this is consistent throughout the Southwest region.

2) Summary of Changes to Inventory of Programs and Services:

- a. We continue to update our accounting systems to align with regulatory changes for future budgets. Previously, the 'UTRCA code' column was used to assist as we transition to a new approach to categorizing programs. The column has been removed as new codes have now been developed in our costing reports.
- b. The Inventory of Programs and Services will be updated to include revised 2022 costing to reflect our updated budget. We are currently finalizing these updates and will highlight any changes in advance of the October 1st submission.
- c. Some refinement to Non-mandatory programs and services to align with organizational modernization efforts have also been made.

3) Update on Progress of Negotiations with Participating Municipalities on Category 2 and 3 Programs and Services:

- a. UTRCA staff are working collaboratively with the Southwest Conservation Authorities on finalizing draft templates for the Memorandum of Understanding for Cost Apportionment Agreements for Category 3 Programs and Services.
- b. Staff will continue to work with neighbouring Conservation Authorities (where possible) to help streamline the process of negotiations with shared participating municipalities on Category 2 Planning MOU's.
- c. Meeting with the City of London regarding Category 2 Planning / Development MOU scheduled for September 22, 2022.

4) Difficulties Reaching Transition Plan Date:

- a. We are entering into a period of change. Municipal staff have advised against bringing forward any agreements during the 'lame duck' period of Council. After the election, new councils will have a period of training and transition. In addition, new appointments to our board of directors are expected. There may be some challenges in progressing agreements during this time.

Summary

The updated programs and services inventory / quarterly progress report will be posted on the UTRCA website, and submitted to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry in accordance with Ontario Regulation 687/21.

Prepared by:

Tracy Annett, General Manager

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Jenna Allain, Manager, Environmental Planning and Regulations
Date: September 20, 2022
Filename: ENVP #12432-1
Agenda #: 7.1
Subject: Administration and Enforcement – Section 28 Status Report – *Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Regulation (O.Reg.157/06)*

Section 28 Report

The attached tables are provided to the Board as a summary of staff activity related to the Conservation Authority's *Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Regulation* (Ontario Regulation 157/06 made pursuant to Section 28 of the Conservation Authorities Act). The summary covers permits issued between August 1, 2022 and August 31, 2022.

To date, 190 permit numbers have been assigned this year with 135 of those permits issued before August 31st. A further seven permits have been issued in 2022 where the permit number was assigned in 2021, bringing the total number of permits issued in 2022 to 142. For comparison, 153 permits were issued in total in 2021, so we are currently on track to issue a significantly higher number of permits this year than last. It should be noted that permit numbers are only assigned once an applicant has submitted an application with all supporting documentation, and does not include files where staff have been engaged in pre-consultation.

Recommended by:

Jenna Allain, Manager, Manager, Environmental Planning and Regulations

Prepared by:

Jessica Schnaithmann, Land Use Regulations Officer
Ben Dafoe, Land Use Regulations Officer
Cari Ramsey, Land Use Regulations Officer
Mike Funk, Land Use Regulations Officer
Brad Dryburgh, Land Use Regulations Assistant
Karen Winfield, Planning and Regulations Resource Specialist

SECTION 28 STATUS REPORT
SUMMARY OF APPLICATIONS FOR 2021

DEVELOPMENT, INTERFERENCE WITH WETLANDS AND ALTERATIONS TO SHORELINE AND WATERCOURSES REGULATION
ONTARIO REGULATION 157/06

Report Date: August 2022

[Client Service Standards for Conservation Authority Plan and Permit Review \(CO, Dec 2019\)](#)

Permit #	Municipality	Location/Address	Category	Application Type	Project Description	Application Received	Notification of Complete Application	Permit Required By	Permit Issued On	Comply with Timelines	Staff
133-22	Stratford	Mornington St and Vivian Line 37	Routine	Utility Corridor	Directional Drill conduit below drain	29-Jun-2022	3-Aug-2022	17-Aug-2022	4-Aug-2022	YES	Dryburgh
154-22	London	215 Warnccliffe Rd N - Jeanne Sauve French Immersion PS	Minor	Development	Parking lot and yard improvements	29-Jul-2022	2-Aug-2022	23-Aug-2022	4-Aug-2022	YES	Funk
151-22	Middlesex Centre	Lot 28, Con 3	Minor	Utility Corridor	Directional drill pipe for fibre optic cable	11-Jul-2022	3-Aug-2022	24-Aug-2022	5-Aug-2022	YES	Dryburgh
152-22	Middlesex Centre	Lot 11, Con 3 to Lot 12, Con 3	Minor	Utility Corridor	Directional drill pipe for fibre optic cable	11-Jul-2022	3-Aug-2022	24-Aug-2022	5-Aug-2022	YES	Dryburgh
158-22	London	50 Charles St	Routine	Development	Basement window opening restoration	10-Aug-2022	15-Aug-2022	29-Aug-2022	15-Aug-2022	YES	Funk
83-22	Zorra	316725 35th Line	Minor	Development	Proposed Garage/Workshop	7-Dec-2021	6-Aug-2022	27-Aug-2022	19-Aug-2022	YES	Dafoe
98-22	London	990 Deveron Crescent	Major	Development	Proposed Construction of Stacked Townhouses	9-May-2022	18-Jul-2022	15-Aug-2022	11-Aug-2022	YES	Schnaithmann
129-22	West Perth	5378 Line 16	Major	Development	Proposed Livestock Barn	4-May-2022	22-Jul-2022	19-Aug-2022	3-Aug-2022	YES	Dafoe
130-22	London	Kilworth Bridge, Oxford Street West	Minor	Municipal Project	Proposed Rehabilitation of Bridge Spanning the Thames River	26-May-2022	10-Jul-2022	31-Jul-2022	10-Aug-2022	NO	Schnaithmann
143-22	Perth South	5083B Line 2	Major	Development	Proposed Single Family Residence & Septic	13-Jul-2022	23-Aug-2022	20-Sep-2022	29-Aug-2022	YES	Dafoe

Permit #	Municipality	Location/Address	Category	Application Type	Project Description	Application Received	Notification of Complete Application	Permit Required By	Permit Issued On	Comply with Timelines	Staff
150-22	London	170 St. Bees Close	Routine	Development	Replacement Deck	14-Jul-2022	12-Aug-2022	26-Aug-2022	17-Aug-2022	YES	Funk
155-22	Stratford	40, 48, 50, 60, 66, 72 Daly Avenue	Major	Development	Preliminary Site Grading and Servicing	25-Nov-2021	19-Aug-2022	16-Sep-2022	31-Aug-2022	YES	Dafoe
156-22	Ingersoll	4 Hartfield St.	Routine	Development	Proposed Above-ground pool	15-Jul-2022	3-Aug-2022	17-Aug-2022	8-Aug-2022	YES	Dafoe
157-22	Perth East	4041 Road 145	Routine	Development	Above Ground Pool and Deck	5-Aug-2022	8-Aug-2022	22-Aug-2022	10-Aug-2022	YES	Dafoe
159-22	Stratford	4117 Line 36	Major	Development	Site Grading and Site Servicing	28-Jun-2022	11-Aug-2022	8-Sep-2022	23-Aug-2022	YES	Dafoe
160-22	Middlesex Centre	65 Atkinson Court	Minor	Development	Proposed pool construction and landscaping	9-Jun-2022	10-Aug-2022	31-Aug-2022	12-Aug-2022	YES	Ramsey
161-22	London	2806 Sheffield Place	Routine	Development	Deck	19-Aug-2022	24-Aug-2022	7-Sep-2022	24-Aug-2022	YES	Funk
170-22	Zorra	357051 35th Line	Major	Restoration/Creation	Wetland Creation	20-Jul-2022	29-Jul-2022	26-Aug-2022	29-Aug-2022	NO	Dafoe
174-22	Middlesex Centre	9382 Avro Drive	Minor	Development	Proposed Ducks Unlimited Wetland creation	17-Feb-2022	22-Jun-2022	13-Jul-2022	31-Aug-2022	NO	Ramsey

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Tracy Annett, General Manager
Date: September 16, 2022
Filename: Admin # 4599
Agenda #: 7.2
Subject: Organization Modernization

Recommendation

THAT the Board receive the following report for information.

Background

History

The UTRCA's organizational structure was developed to operationalize the 1996 Strategic plan and was purposefully created with few hierarchical levels to facilitate integration amongst units. In 2015 the Water and Information Management and Environmental Planning and Regulations Units were created to replace the former Hydrology and Regulatory Services and Source Protection Planning programs, reflecting changes to the delivery of these programs by the UTRCA and the need to add capacity.

Demand for programs and services from watershed residents and provincial agencies, coupled with the Authority's desire to implement environmental targets, have resulted in increasing staff numbers since 1996 and a much broader and sophisticated offering of programs and services.

The changes to organization structure currently underway continue to improve the coordination required to achieve our strategic objectives within a new regulatory framework. In addition, the structure allows for improved coordination for funding applications, transparency, and reporting as these requirements have also increased overtime.

Discussion:

Key areas were addressed through the modernization:

- Responding to retirements and the need for continuity of service and succession planning
- Aligning the organization's programs and services with those identified in regulation deliverables
- Improving work planning to support environmental targets and regulatory responsibilities while providing staff performance feedback

- Recognizing the importance of staff retention and the need to provide staff with opportunities for growth and on the job training for junior level positions

Framework Development

The management Team developed a framework to follow as an organizational structure for the delivery of our programs and services across all program areas. Having the framework in place allowed for improved understanding of our regulatory responsibilities and strategic goals. The Framework was shared with staff for opportunities to provide input. As retirements occurred, this framework assisted to ensure our accountabilities, functions and service delivery roles were captured in new position descriptions. The resulting changed from seven to five organizational units each with manager while adding senior supervisory/coordination roles in many of the program areas.

Organizational Structure

Changes in each Unit are described below:

Community and Corporate Services (C & C Services)

The Finance Unit has been reorganized from 4 into 5 positions. An Insurance and Asset Administrator position has been added and has assumed responsibilities that were previously split between two positions in the Lands, Facilities and Conservation Areas unit and will support the development of the Authority's Asset Management Planning efforts. A Coordinator of Communications and Marketing position was created to better plan for internal and external communications and marketing needs. A Human Resources Coordinator position has been created to reflect the current HR and Payroll needs of the Authority.

Lands, Facilities and Conservation Areas (LFCA)

Recent amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act (CA Act) provided for an opportunity to take a closer look at how the Authority manages the nearly 5,800 ha of land. Formerly known as two separate units, the Conservation Areas unit and the Lands and Facilities unit were recently merged into one land management program area now called the Lands, Facilities and Conservation Areas (LFCA) division.

This departmental restructuring of the duties and responsibilities of CA land management staff into new positions highlighted below (assumed from previous positions removed through attrition) will ensure the Authority will be more consistent and aligned with the Category 1-3 programs and services identified through the regulatory updates. Within the LFCA division, there are now three main program areas that include:

- Conservation Areas
- Land Management, and
- Asset Management

Support is provided through the Land Management Supervisor, and Properties Superintendent positions.

Although the LFCA division has been further defined into three separate units, it is important to note that there will be significant crossover between the staff and resources available to ensure an efficient and effective land management program at the UTRCA.

Environmental Planning and Regulations (ENVP&R)

Changes in the ENVP&R unit have been focused on adding capacity to keep up with significant increases in development pressures and to respond to anticipated tighter commenting timelines as a result of Bill 109, More Homes for Everyone Act, 2002. We Changes also allow for more structure and overlap within the unit. This has provided new opportunities for some of our more experienced staff while creating more junior positions for new staff that have been added to our team. The overlap has provided more coverage and allows the unit to transition more easily if someone is away or leaves their position.

Adjustments to planning staff include moving from three Land Use Planners to the creation of a Planning Coordinator position which oversees two Planner II positions and two Planner I positions. Similar adjustments have been made to regulations staff where the previous structure included four Regulations Officers and a Regulations Technician. A Regulations Coordinator position was created that has not yet been filled that will oversee the four Regulations Officers and two Regulations Assistants.

Some capacity has also been added to the Technical Support staff with the addition of a Planning and Regulations Resource Specialist position and changing the Planning Ecologist position from 0.5 FTE to a full FTE. The addition of a Junior Environmental Engineer position is currently underway.

Water and Information Management (WIM)

The Water and Information Management unit is organized into 4 program areas:

- Flood Forecasting and Warning,
- Water and Erosion Control Structures,
- Hazard Mapping and Modelling, and
- Information Management.

Many of the organization changes occurring in other units had already occurred in this unit. Each of the program areas (other than Information Management) continues to have a senior supervisor/coordinator responsible for those programs. More recent efforts in this unit have been focused on retaining staff joining in entry level positions and accepting additional responsibilities with added experience and qualifications. This has resulted in some new positions being created while leaving the more junior positions vacant. Recent funding applications may provide for filling some of those vacant positions in the Hazard Mapping and Modelling program area. Also efforts were focused on filling vacancies in the Water and Erosion Control Structures program area. Efforts to review responsibilities and update job descriptions are ongoing.

The Water and Information Management unit also include Information Management other than Geographic Information Systems (which resides within the Integrated Watershed Management unit). It is expected that both these aspects of Information Management will be consolidated under the Corporate Services Unit in the future. As part of this consolidation, it is expected that additional staffing resources will be needed to support the additional pressure on management of our information and the changing technology and tools for managing that information. With any future adjustments to the organization of information management services, it will be important to continue to recognize the high dependence the Water Management programs have on time series

(WISKI) and spatial data (GIS). As such it is anticipated that the Water and Information Management unit will continue to include staffing resources in time series and spatial data management who will work closely with the information management and systems specialists in the Corporate Services unit.

Integrated Watershed Management (IWM)

The Conservation Services and Planning and Research Units have been combined to form the integrated Watershed Management Unit. Within this unit Science and Stewardship Teams have been identified. These teams organize and collect watershed environmental information; then using that information plan for and deliver science-based stewardship activities across our watershed. Coordinator of Science and Coordinator of Stewardship positions have been created to lead these teams.

The Science team maintains ecology, biology and water quality research skills and expertise. The Stewardship group delivers on-the-ground technical and financial assistance programs to farming and non-farming landowners, community groups, industry, municipalities and many other partners. This includes all private land tree planting, communities for nature, memorial forestry, stream restoration, wetland and erosion control programs and agricultural-based water quality studies.

Summary

Many of the changes made to date have aligned with the twelve staff retirements. A few more changes are still needed to fulfill the modernization goals. The organizational changes made have resulted in the reduction of two manager positions, while increasing the number of program coordinator positions by seven. In addition, more junior positions have been created. The net result is a similar number of full time equivalents (FTE's) however, the new structure allows for more opportunities for growth and retention while ensuring continuity in service delivery within program areas at the UTRCA.

Prepared by:

Tracy Annett, General Manager

Teresa Hollingsworth, Community and Corporate Services Manager

Brent Versheure, Lands, Facilities and Conservation Areas Manager

Chris Taster, Water and Information Management Manager

Jenna Allain, Environmental Planning and Regulations Manger

Brad Glasman, Integrated Watershed Management Manager

Attachments –

Organization Modernization Overview

September 2022 Org. Chart

Strategic Plan Update

To also include our largest asset - our People who do the work to meet our Environmental Targets / Strategic Objectives.

Areas of emphasis: 1) Leadership, 2) Healthy & Respectful Workplace, 3) Continuous Improvement, 4) Performance Accountability and 5) Effective Communications

Conservation Authorities Act: The purpose to provide for the organization and delivery of programs and services that further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources in watersheds in Ontario.

SECTION 21.1 MANDATORY PROGRAM NAME	CONSERVATION AUTHORITY LANDS & CONSERVATION AREAS			CORE WATERSHED BASED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY & WATER QUALITY MONITORING		NATURAL HAZARDS MANAGEMENT & DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION					
UTRCA Unit Name	Lands, Facilities, and Conservation Areas			Integrated Watershed Management		Environmental Planning & Regulations			Water Management & Climate Change		
Targets or Legislative Responsibilities	Reach 1 million people annually with conservation messages through access to UTRCA lands and demonstration of green infrastructure, by the year 2037			Establish and restore 1,500 hectares of natural vegetation cover, windbreaks and buffers by 2037	Improve each subwatershed's water quality score by one letter grade, as measured by the Watersheds Report Cards by 2037	Fulfilling Regulatory and Delegated responsibilities under the Conservation Authorities Act, Planning Act and Clean Water Act.			Reduce flood and erosion risk by updating flood models and hazard mapping for all subwatersheds by 2020, then integrating climate change scenarios into the updated models and developing climate change adaptation strategies by 2030		
Program Areas (Consistent with CO naming)	Conservation Areas	Asset Management	Land Management	Watershed Stewardship & Restoration	Research, Monitoring & Reporting	Planning	Regulations	Drinking Water Source Protection	Flood and erosion Control Infrastructure	Flood Plain & Hazard Mapping	Flood Forecasting & Warning
Activities and/or Services	Fanshawe Wildwood Pittock	Property Facilities Fleet & Equipment	ESA's Rural Properties & CA's Leases and Agreements	Agricultural Stewardship Tree Planting & Forest Management Wetland Enhancement & Restoration Invasive Species Management	Water Quality & Quantity Monitoring PWQMN/PGWMN Natural Heritage & Ecological Monitoring Biological Monitoring (e.g. Aquatic, Species at Risk)	Plan Input Plan Review Sub-watershed Planning	Section 28 Administration Compliance Other Legislation	Source Protection Planning Risk Management RMO/RMI Groundwater	Infrastructure Operation & Maintenance Capital Projects & Planning Low Flow Augmentation	Hazard Modelling Natural Hazard Technical Studies & Data Management Climate Change Mitigation	Note * Communications support in CCS Monitoring, Data & Equipment Low Water Response Ice Management Services
Climate Change Mitigation, Adaptation & Resiliency	Ensure use of conservation lands is responsive to a changing climate. Conservation Authorities contribute to greenhouse gas mitigation through their operations and increasing use of sustainable transportation within their fleet, identifying and applying energy conservation technologies and practices, and incorporating or implementing renewable energy systems (e.g. water power).			Increase resilience through conservation and restoration Watershed programs build local natural resource resiliency by protecting and improving water quality, ensuring sustainable water supplies, restoring and protecting biodiversity, and addressing low water issues. Conservation Authority program areas that mitigate greenhouse gases include reforestation, carbon sequestration (e.g. wetlands), low impact development, and partnering in carbon offset opportunities (reforestation, habitat enhancement, carbon sequestration).		Protect life and property from natural hazards in the face of a changing climate Conservation Authorities also protect people and property from increased flooding and other natural hazards, as well as work with agencies, businesses and residents to implement a wide variety of green infrastructure and water quality, and stormwater management strategies and practices.			Enhance our knowledge of future flooding and erosion hazards Conservation Authorities monitor, track, and report on local conditions in Ontario's watersheds which can be used for climate change modelling and monitoring.		

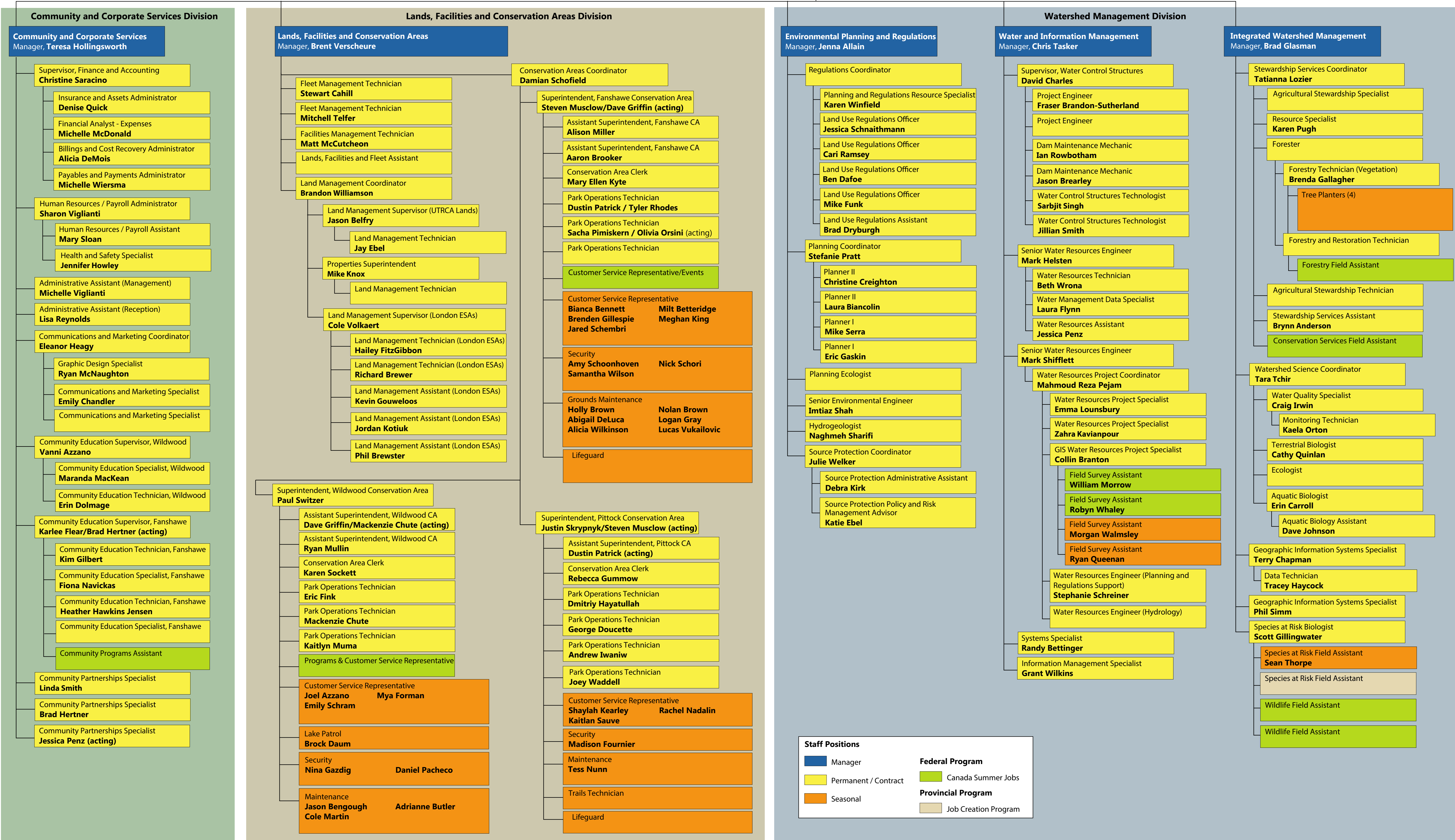
SECTION 21.1 MANDATORY PROGRAM NAME	CONSERVATION AUTHORITY LANDS & CONSERVATION AREAS	CORE WATERSHED BASED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY & WATER QUALITY MONITORING	NATURAL HAZARDS MANAGEMENT & DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION	
Plans / Deliverables:	Conservation Area Strategy - Guiding principles, objectives, including for an authority's land acquisition and disposition strategy, land use categories on conservation authority owned land, recommended management principles for different land categories, etc. Land Inventory - Development of an inventory containing information for every parcel of land owned or controlled by the Authority.	Core Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy - Develop guiding principles and objectives that inform the design and delivery of programs and services the CA is required to provide Collate/compile existing resource management plans, watershed plans, studies and data. Strategy development, Implementation & annual reporting. A review of programs and services provide for the purposes of compliance with CA Act Develop a process for periodic review including procedures to engage/ consult with stakeholders and the public. Strategy development must include a stakeholder and public consultation component The Watershed based resource management strategy must be made public on the CA website.	Section 28 Regulations - Phase 2 - Expect updates to policies and procedures to reflect Regulatory amendments	Operational and Asset management plans – (no details yet) Ice Management Plan

SECTION 21.1 MANDATORY PROGRAM NAME	ENABLING PROGRAM SERVICES			
UTRCA Unit Name	Community & Corporate Services			
Targets or Legislative Responsibilities	Administrative, human resources, operating and capital costs which are not directly related to the delivery of any specific program or service, but are the overhead and support costs of a conservation authority. Defined through Phase 2 Regulations.			
Program Areas (Consistent with CO naming)	Information / Technology Management	Communications & Marketing	Corporate Services	Conservation / Outdoor Education
Activities and/or Services	GIS Data Integration Records Retention Systems Development & Infrastructure	Marketing Communications Graphic Design	Administration & Governance Health & Safety Financial Services	Community Partnerships Conservation Education *Natural Hazards Communications Outreach and Education
Climate Change Mitigation, Adaptation & Resiliency	Communicate to raise awareness and increase resiliency around climate change Climate change information needs to be shared with both technical and non-technical stakeholders to support shared goals of health, safe and resilient communities. Effective climate change education for youth will help them prepare for the effects – both negative and positive – that will shape their lives in the foreseeable future.			
Plans / Deliverables:	Communications Support for all plans / deliverables Governance, Accountability & Transparency Comply with Levy Regulations - Phase 2			

Layout shown above is intended to highlight the overlap between functions of the Authority - the Shared Responsibilities between Unit programs to achieve our strategic goals

Board of Directors

General Manager / Secretary Treasurer
Tracy Annett



fyi

September 2022

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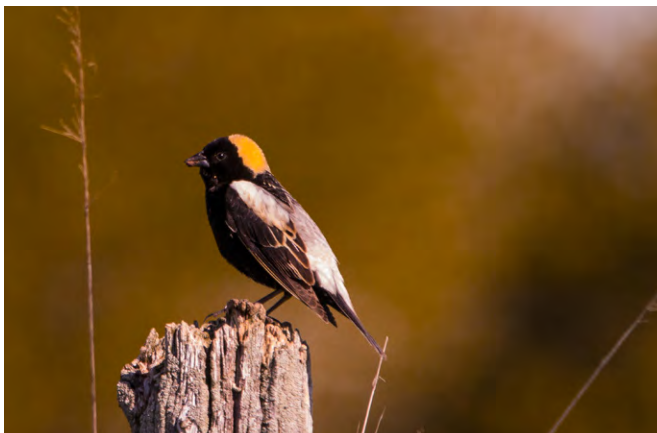


Summer education program at Fanshawe Conservation Area.

UTRCA to Establish Prairie for Grassland Birds under MTO Contract

The UTRCA has signed a 20 year agreement with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) to establish, maintain, and monitor 22.6 hectares of tallgrass prairie habitat for Eastern Meadowlarks and Bobolinks. These grassland birds are Species at Risk classified as threatened in Ontario.

The new tallgrass prairies will compensate for habitat that will be lost due to highway improvements undertaken by the MTO in southwestern Ontario. MTO is providing the project funding and the UTRCA is providing the land, expertise, and project management.



Bobolink nest in tallgrass prairie habitat.

The UTRCA will establish the prairies at two sites: a field at Wildwood Conservation Area (CA) and two fields, including the former Cricket Club field, at Fanshawe CA. Over the next two years, the fields will be prepared by removing the existing vegetation cover, and then seeded with a native tallgrass prairie seed mix. Afterwards, the sites will be monitored and managed to ensure good germination, growth, and weed control. Once the prairies are established, staff will undertake yearly checks to see if Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlarks are using the sites.

Tallgrass prairies provide habitat for a wide range of plant and animal species, including many insect pollinators. Establishing this important habitat will help boost the populations of Eastern Meadowlarks and Bobolinks as well as helping the UTRCA meet its environmental target of establishing and restoring 1500 hectares of natural vegetation cover in the upper Thames River watershed by 2037.

Contact: [Cathy Quinlan](mailto:Cathy.Quinlan@utrca.on.ca), Terrestrial Biologist

New and Returning Tree Power!

Residents of Perth South can purchase a tree for their property through the Tree Power program again this fall. It's the second year that the UTRCA and Municipality of Perth South have partnered to provide residents with affordable trees. Last year's inaugural program was very well received by residents.

The 300 trees available this year include Autumn Fantasy Maple, Black Cherry, Downy Serviceberry, Hackberry, Red Maple, Red Oak, and Sugar Maple.

Perth South residents can purchase trees at www.perthsouthtreepower.ca. The trees will be available for pick up on October 1.



Last year's tree pick up day for Perth South Tree Power.

In nearby St. Marys, the Town of St. Marys and the UTRCA have partnered to make 300 native hardwood trees available and affordable for residents of St. Marys with the first St. Marys Tree Power!

St. Marys residents can purchase trees online at www.stmarystreepower.ca. The trees will be available for pick up in St. Marys on October 15.

The goal of this project is to create a greener and more beautiful community by adding native trees. The project partners that contributed funding and in-kind donations include the Town of St. Marys, St. Marys Green Committee, and UTRCA.

Contact: [Emily Chandler](#), Communications and Marketing Specialist, or [Karen Pugh](#), Resource Specialist

Living Lab - Ontario Summer Series

UTRCA staff attended a Living Lab – Ontario event in early August. The day showcased joint research between Greg Vermeersch, who farms near Tillsonburg, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) on the impact of relay cropping vs. double cropping soybeans, after both cereal rye and barley, on a variety of soil health indicators.

Relay cropping at this field trial involved planting soybeans into the standing cereal rye or barley crop before harvest, whereas double cropped plots had the soybeans planted after the winter cereals were harvested.

The event was part of the Living Lab – Ontario Summer Series, which showcased research projects across the Lake Erie basin.

Dr. Lori Phillips from AAFC provided an overview of some preliminary research findings, revealing there was an increase in microbial respiration (biological activity) in the relay crop system compared to the baseline soil data. The amount of biological activity in the soil can be a measure of soil health and impacts soil functions such as building organic matter, nutrient cycling, and soil resilience. Initial results show great promise for the positive impact that changes in management can have on the soil microbial community and soil health.



Greg Vermeersch discussing lessons learned around the logistics of harvesting the cereals vs. planting soybeans in relay and double cropping systems.

The UTRCA is a partner in Living Lab – Ontario, which is one of the original four living labs across the country, formed under the Living Laboratories Initiative. Earlier this year, AAFC introduced nine new living labs under the Agricultural Climate Solutions program. Each living lab focuses on an integrated approach to agricultural innovation that brings farmers, scientists, and other partners together to co-develop, test, and monitor new practices and technologies in a real-life context. The UTRCA’s role is to collect water quality and quantity monitoring data and information on local adoption of Beneficial Management Practices, which will be used to assist scientists in their research.

The Living Lab – Ontario project is constantly evolving as the project progresses. For more information go to:

- [Living Laboratories Initiative](#)
- [Living Lab – Ontario](#) (AAFC)
- [Living Lab - Ontario](#) (OSCIA)

Contact: [Tatianna Lozier](#), Stewardship Services Coordinator

Summer Education Programs

What do an Eastern Screech Owl, fuzzy young groundhogs, and a giant mayfly nymph have in common? They were all spotted this year during summer programs at Fanshawe and Pittock Conservation Areas! With 12 different free events, Fanshawe Community Education staff offered a range of options for the public to enjoy including evening firefly walks, sunny bug hunts, and creative family play in the forest. Staff were also happy to provide more events at Pittock this year and highlight the natural heritage of Woodstock. (Insider tip: If you’re interested in owls, check out Pittock Conservation Area!)



Summer events are a fun, inexpensive way for community members to connect with their local conservation area and discover interesting environmental facts from

outdoor educators. If you missed out on a summer event, follow the UTRCA on Eventbrite to be notified of any upcoming community programs.

Contact: [Heather Hawkins Jensen](#), Community Education Technician

On the Board Agenda

The next Board of Directors meeting will be held virtually on September 27, 2022. Please visit the “Board Agendas and Minutes” page at www.thamesriver.on.ca for agendas, reports, audio/video links and recordings, and approved minutes.

- Correspondence from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
- 2023 Draft Budget Concepts Memo
- Strathroy-Caradoc Boundary Adjustment/Enlargement
- Progress Report #2 – Inventory of Programs and Services
- Administration and Enforcement – Section 28 Status Report
- Organization Modernization Overview

Contact: [Michelle Viglianti](#), Administrative Assistant