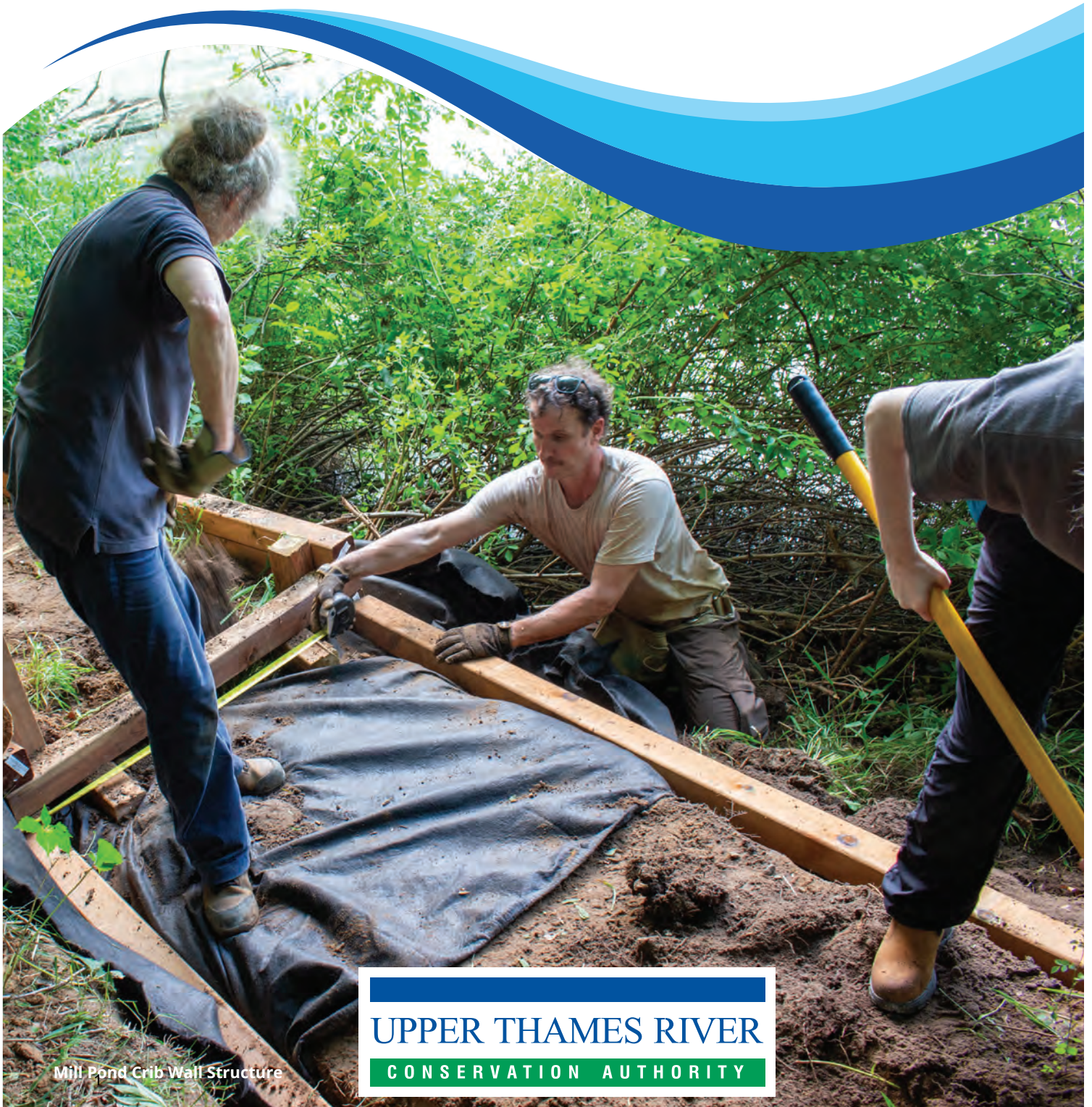


Board of Directors

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority



Mill Pond Crib Wall Structure

UPPER THAMES RIVER
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Board of Directors' Meeting Agenda – August 2025 - Amended

Date: August 26, 2025

Time: 9:30am

Place: Watershed Conservation Centre Board Room, Fanshawe Conservation Area –
1424 Clarke Road, London, ON

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: June 24, 2025

5.2. Business Arising from Minutes

5.3. Correspondence

5.3.1. Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

6. Reports – For Consideration

6.1. R.T Orr and Lake Victoria Drawdown – BoD-08-25-54

6.2. 2026 Preliminary Draft Budget – BoD-08-25-55

7. Reports – In Camera

8. Reports – For Information

- 8.1. 2025 Mid-Year Financial Update and Revised Budget – BoD-08-25-56
- 8.2. Strategic Plan Update – BoD-08-25-57
- 8.3. Administration and Enforcement – Section 28 Status Report – BoD-08-25- 58
- 8.4. Administrative Review Officers (ARO) Discretionary Policy Decisions – Quarterly Report – BoD-08-25-59
- 8.5. Hazard Mapping Consultation Update – BoD-08-25-60
- 8.6. Project Status Update – BoD-08-25-61
- 8.7. [Thames River Current August Edition](#)

9. Reports – Committee Updates

- 9.1. Finance and Audit Committee – June 24th Meeting BoD-08-25-62
- 9.2. Hearing Committee

10. Notices of Motion

11. Chair’s Comments

12. Member’s Comments

13. General Manager’s Comments

14. Adjournment

Tracy Annett, General Manager

**Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks**

Conservation and Source
Protection Branch

3rd Floor
40 St. Clair Ave. West
Toronto ON M4V 1M2

**Ministère de l'Environnement, de la
Protection de la nature et des Parcs**

Direction de la protection de la nature et
des sources

3^e étage
40, avenue St. Clair Ouest
Toronto (Ontario) M4V 1M2



June 27, 2025

**MEMORANDUM TO: Conservation Authority General Managers or Chief
Administrative Officers, Conservation Authority Partners
and Interested Parties**

**FROM: Kirsten Service, Director Conservation & Source
Protection Branch, MECP**

**RE: Transition of Conservation Authority Program from the
Ministry of Natural Resources to the Ministry of the
Environment, Conservation and Parks**

Good morning,

I am writing to advise you that the responsibility for the province's conservation authority program has now transitioned from the Minister of Natural Resources to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) through Orders in Council. Moving forward, the Minister of Natural Resources no longer has legislative duties or functions under the *Conservation Authorities Act* but retains leadership for natural hazard management policy and operations.

Staff supporting the important work of administering this portfolio and delivering on the government's priorities for conservation authorities will be moving to a newly created section named the Conservation Authorities Section within the Conservation and Source Protection Branch in MECP's Land and Water Division.

Stakeholders can continue to reach out to ministry staff as they have done in the past on conservation authority matters via ca.office@ontario.ca.

We thank you for your ongoing support during this time of transition. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K Service".

Kirsten Service, Director
Conservation and Source Protection Branch
Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Chris Tasker, Manager, Water and Information Management
Date: August 18, 2025
File Number: BoD-08-25-54
Agenda #: 6.1
Subject: RT Orr and Lake Victoria Drawdown

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Directors receive this report for information and direct staff to implement the items identified in the next steps section of this report.

Background

The UTRCA is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the R Thomas Orr Dam (Orr Dam). The City of Stratford pays the UTRCA a levy to cover the cost of dam operations, maintenance, and capital projects. Major maintenance projects may receive up to 50% funding from the Water and Erosion Control Structure Infrastructure (WECI) program, but all other costs associated with the operation and maintenance of Orr Dam are funded by Stratford as the benefiting municipality.

The UTRCA contracts the city to undertake monitoring through their Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, complete routine checks on the dam and provide local operators.

Orr Dam creates a reservoir often referred to as Lake Victoria which is a focal point of extensive parks along its banks.

Dam Operation

The dam is drawn down approximately 1 metre in November. Winter levels are maintained by stop logs, which are typically installed in front of the south gate. This allows the gate behind the logs to be opened without the water level falling below the elevation of the logs. Having the gate open provides additional discharge capacity before the other gate would need to be operated. This allows the higher winter and spring flows to be safely passed through the dam.

In April, the gate behind the logs is lowered incrementally to slowly increase water levels in the lake to the summer level, while maintaining flow downstream. Filling the reservoir in April is often accomplished with frequent April runoff events.

During the summer season the water level is maintained at a relatively constant level by the concrete weir which juts out upstream of the middle of the dam. The V shape of the weir allows for a longer weir length, increasing the flow over the weir for a given water level.

Summer rain/runoff events require dam operations as, without appropriate response to increased inflows, the lake level would rise and flood low properties and adjacent roadways.

Gate operations are automated to enable quick response to stormwater runoff. Early automatic systems were analogue, controlled with a series of water level probes, timers and sensors. Controls were changed to a Programmable Logic Controlled (PLC) to be able to be integrated into the city SCADA system. These systems were recently upgraded to remain compatible with the city SCADA system.

As the water level in the lake rises, the gates are opened to release more water, preventing water from flooding properties and roads upstream. If the water level continues to rise to the next setpoint, gate(s) are opened further, until the level drops. These operations need to happen in a timely manner as the lake responds quickly to runoff from the urban and rural areas flowing into it. When the water level in the lake decreases sufficiently, the gates are closed incrementally until fully closed and the water level is close to normal level.

Gate Painting and Refurbishment

The south gate was removed last fall for painting and refurbishing. Winter water levels were maintained by the stoplogs while the gate was out. As refurbishment was not able to be completed by the time the lake was scheduled to be brought up to summer level, additional stoplogs were added to the south bay to allow the reservoir to be raised to summer level while the gate remained out. The gate was later returned to its bay and, soon after, returned to service.

With the logs up to summer level in the south bay, only the north gate was able to be opened in response to rising levels. It is preferred that both gates be in auto. When both gates are in auto, following the initial openings, the second gate is opened to the same setting before both gates are operated together. This allows initial openings to occur at the gate with the logs in front but allows for both gates to be opened as needed to match inflows.

July 24 Runoff Event

Orr Dam gate opened in response to rainfall on Thursday, July 24. The north part of the UTRCA watershed received 30-40mm. The tipping bucket rain gauge at Orr Dam recorded 33 mm, 25 mm of which was recorded in 30 minutes. Urban runoff from that rainfall was enough to trigger the first opening of the north gate which was in auto.

In response to rising lake levels, the gate opened to its first opening of 3 inches and remained open until the lake levels came back down 4 hours later. When the levels dropped below the closing set point, the gate closed. Due to some debris being stuck under the gate, it was not able to fully close allowing the lake level to gradually fall. Lake levels approached the weir elevation during the morning of Saturday, July 26.

The dam status including water level, gate positions, and alarms are monitored by the city through their SCADA system. The UTRCA also maintains a datalogger on site which monitors the same parameters in addition to others. Communications with the

logger were lost during the storm. Staff were able to remotely switch to redundant phone lines to re-establish communications with the dam. A site visit was necessary to confirm the accuracy of the telemetry. This loss of communication between the Orr Dam data logger and monitoring equipment did not affect the constant communications between the dam PLC and SCADA system. The UTRCA, the city and Water Survey Canada are all switching away from landline phone connections to cellular and/or satellite-based communications due in part to the increased difficulty of relying on copper circuits for these types of communications, and for better reliability.

Reservoir Drawdown

On the morning of Monday, July 28 levels were approximately 0.09 m below the weir (summer level). Attempts to open the gate and free the debris resulted in the gate not being able to be closed as much, increasing the rate of fall of the reservoir. Successive gate openings and closing resulted in a larger gate opening with each attempt. While additional openings of the gate may have been successful in passing the debris, the steadily increasing gate opening gave reason to believe that further opening would result in the gate remaining open to a greater amount. Had this occurred the lake would have dropped very quickly stranding aquatic life in the lake.

Attempting to open the gate more was considered numerous times, and each time it was concluded that further openings could make the situation worse by greatly increasing the rate that the reservoir was falling. While the reservoir was drawing down faster than the initial amount it was still slow enough that conditions could be monitored and efforts to mitigate against stranded aquatic life could be reasonably successful.

Aquatic Life Mitigation Efforts

An aquatic species recovery effort was undertaken by UTRCA staff during the drawdown of Lake Victoria. Led by our Aquatic Biologist, a team of 12 staff spent three days along the shoreline rescuing stranded mussels, and one puddle of fishes (sunfish and shiners) which were netted back into the water. While some Snapping Turtles were spotted by the reservoir, they successfully moved to safer areas during the drawdown. Other reports of turtle sightings did not require a response.

Due to the extreme heat in the days leading up to the drawdown, water temperatures were in the 30-degree range. A temperature of 37 degrees was recorded in one of the isolated puddles. Water temperatures this hot cause stress for fish, mussels, and other species. The gradual drawdown avoided exacerbating this problem and provided time for staff to respond.

The recovery efforts were successful in moving 1,075 stranded mussels from exposed flats to further upstream where water levels remained higher. The types of mussels found were common species including Fatmucket, Slippershell, Creeper, Creek Heelsplitter, Cylindrical Papershell, and Giant Floater.

Freshwater mussels offer several benefits to aquatic ecosystems, including water filtration, nutrient cycling, and support for the food web. They act as natural water filters, improving clarity and removing excess nutrients. Their role in the ecosystem also extends to carbon sequestration and providing a food source for various animals.

Freshwater mussels, the group of species belonging to Unionidae, are the most imperiled organisms in North America, but none of the animals located in Lake Victoria are considered to be at-risk. Mussels are an important population in the lake's ecosystem.

Debris Removal Efforts

On Thursday, July 31 reservoir levels were low enough to be able to safely access the gate forebay, assess and clear debris. UTRCA crews were mobilized to clear the gate and close it.

While crews worked on debris removal in front of the north gate, the south gate was fully tested to ensure that it would be able to be placed in auto once the reservoir returned to summer level. Previously, the south gate was not able to be fully operated, after being reinstalled, without risking drawing the reservoir down below the weir.

Also, in preparation for the north gate being fully closed, additional logs were removed from the middle stop log bay of the south gate. It is important that discharge downstream be maintained at all times as noted elsewhere in this report. The removal of these logs would allow for discharge while the reservoir is being filled and prevented it from being completely drawn down. As the reservoir rises additional logs have/will be added so that levels can continue to be maintained above the level of the lowest log. Once the reservoir is flowing over the weir the logs above the summer level can be removed so that the south gate can be placed in auto.

Part of the efforts by UTRCA staff to get the north sluice gate closed involved removal of debris from in front of the gate. At this point, the water levels were low enough that staff could safely access the area to cut and pry loose the underwater debris, removing branches and debris that were wedged in place, as well as extensive smaller woody material.

When opening the gate, some debris would have passed downstream but not much was visible floating. Since this material was waterlogged, it would tend to stay hidden underwater.

Once the north gate was fully closed, while the staff were on site, they used the boat to access the forebay area and remove as much submerged debris as possible.

On Saturday, August 2 with water levels rising, staff were on site to reinstall one of the stop logs. This log had been removed to allow discharge downstream with the north gate fully closed. At this point, water levels had risen to allow water to flow over this stoplog once it was installed. To re-install the stoplog, debris in front of the stoplogs needed to be removed. This was done from a boat using hooks and a pole saw. Significant debris accumulation in front of the bottom stop logs will need to be addressed prior to moving the stop logs to the north bay to facilitate removal of that gate from refurbishment without affecting seasonal water levels. It would normally be necessary to draw the reservoir down completely to move the gains and logs to the north gate. Using divers may be considered to facilitate additional debris and sediment removal and allow the installation of the gains and logs.

In addition to the woody debris removed by staff, it is also worth noting that, prior to this effort, someone had removed numerous bike frames and other metal objects from the vicinity of the dam. It has been suggested that this was removed using a magnet. This material had been left on the dam deck by whoever collected this scrap. This scrap metal was left for disposal by city parks staff.

Reservoir Filling

Sufficient flows must be maintained downstream of the dam, channel and John St Weir to support aquatic life. While many want the lake to be refilled as quickly as possible it is important that adequate flows be maintained downstream during the filling.

We have been clear in communication that filling Lake Victoria without significant precipitation will be a slow process, and it is difficult to forecast how quickly it can be filled. It was also communicated that the rise will slow as the lake surface area gets bigger (i.e., as the water spreads out over a wider area). Inflows from the Avon River are likely declining as well, making it even more challenging. Flows at most stream gauges across the watershed have been declining, due to the prolonged dry spell and we are approaching the conditions of a level 1 drought in parts of the UTRCA.

While there was some rain in the forecasts, the amounts were not expected to be enough to generate the runoff needed to help fill the lake. Since the lake was drawn down the drainage area supplying water to the lake has received a few minor runoff events which has helped significantly in getting the reservoir to its current level.

While the limited rain has greatly helped the filling of the lake, at the time of writing this report, the lake is approximately 0.67 m below the weir (summer level) and rising very slowly. We continue to do what we can to bring the lake back up while still maintaining flows downstream.

To ensure we maintain adequate flows downstream, the John St Weir slide gate has been opened slightly. This maintains a relatively constant flow while gate operations and log adjustments are made at Orr Dam. As the channel draws down it is necessary to fill the channel occasionally to ensure it can still be used in this manner. As the channel is refilled Lake Victoria falls slightly.

A proposal has been submitted to provincial ministries to pump water from an upstream gravel pit, into the adjacent Avon River, to flow downstream to Lake Victoria, and assist in filling the reservoir. This initiative has been undertaken by organizers of the Stratford Rotary Dragon Boat Festival. To be able to pump water into the Avon River, permits would be required from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Ministry of Natural Resources. Part of the approval process will be to determine if there are potential negative impacts of the pumping and consider necessary mitigation measures. The UTRCA has provided information to the proponent and their consultant. Any additional inflow into the river would greatly assist in raising the lake to its normal summer level faster. While this initiative is being undertaken by the organizers of the Dragon Boat Festival, it would also benefit other recreational users of Lake Victoria and the businesses that depend on it. The dragon boat festival organizers have also considered alternative venues and are pursuing Wildwood Conservation Area as an alternative location.

Debris Management

Woody debris is naturally transported through rivers. Although the parkland surrounding Lake Victoria is well-manicured, there are trees overhanging the lake. The Avon River upstream of the lake is a natural river with streambank vegetation which can also be carried downstream, particularly in the spring. Submerged woody vegetation may remain in place with very low velocities through the lake, however, floating debris is easily shifted by wind and current.

In a natural watercourse this material provides habitat. This same material can, however, present challenges in the operation of a dam. While the nature of the materials which accumulate at Orr Dam have not presented challenges in being able to open gates to prevent upstream flooding, it has presented issues with gates sealing after operation, as occurred during this event.

Debris caught under the gates may be able to be resolved by opening the gates to flush the debris out. If the reservoir is drawn down during this flushing, higher inflows in the spring allow the lake to return to summer operating levels faster. As discussed above, this was considered multiple times and weighed against the risks of the reservoir being drawn down faster than occurred.

In addition to the natural debris described above, trash also accumulates in the lake. Items removed from around the dam included various metal objects (e.g., shopping cart, bike tires, bike frame, drone, etc.). Debris is cleared regularly when it affects operations of the dam. Debris tends to settle in the deep water in front of the gates, where it cannot easily be removed without fully draining the reservoir due to water depth, clarity, and safety considerations. Divers could be utilized to clear debris from in front of the gates when they are fully closed and flow through a gate does not pose a risk to the divers.

Stratford's Environmental Services and Public Works teams have cleared debris near storm outfalls. Parks staff have been working alongside volunteers to clean garbage and waste from the lake's edge. A few remaining pieces of trash, including items like metal drums, remain stranded in the mud flats, and will be removed when it is safe to do so (typically in the early winter, when the mud is firmer). Larger logs and branches within and around the lake provide habitat for fish and other aquatic life, so some will be left in place unless they pose a significant barrier.

Dredging or removing sediment when water levels are low is not something that can be done immediately, but the city is considering this in the future. Dredging a lake is a complex undertaking with significant environmental considerations and regulatory approvals. This idea has been raised in the past and may be investigated further in the future. Before proceeding with dredging, testing of the sediment would need to be done, an appropriate disposal location/method for the dredged materials must be determined and various permits would be required. The city may need to consider whether an environmental assessment or impact study should be undertaken prior to proceeding with such a large-scale project. If sediment removal is being considered, it will be important to consider sediment management at the dam which has been the subject of previous studies.

Opportunities to Protect Against Future Incidents

Debris is naturally occurring and is to be expected in the operation of the dam.

In the 1970's debris was reported to be the cause of Wildwood Reservoir being drawn down quickly in the summer. In addition to causing issues for the recreational use of the reservoir, that season debris prevented the reservoir from being able to supply its flow augmentation.

Debris was also a major contributing factor to the failure of Springbank Dam in July 2000 where very large woody vegetation and floating docks reduced the capacity of the spillway and prevented logs from being removed. The debris resulting in these incidents can be contrasted to the relatively small debris that floats down to Orr Dam but highlights how it is possible for debris to cause severe consequences.

While Lake Victoria levels are still lower than summer level and are restricting activities around the reservoir, we have managed to regain much of the water lost. While it remains difficult to continue to refill the reservoir without additional inflow, it is possible to maintain the levels at close to the current level by allowing flow over the stoplogs.

RT Orr Dam is a recreational dam, which provides various recreational opportunities in and around the reservoir that it creates (Lake Victoria) which is a focal point in the City of Stratford's park system. While not a flood control dam, the gates must be able to be operated to prevent upstream flooding and must have adequate discharge capacity even with debris being considered. The nature of the debris at Orr Dam is not such that this has been, or would become, a problem from a flood control or dam safety perspective. However, with the dependance on the dam for maintaining the lake within the park and the various activities that have come to rely on this lake, it is prudent to consider what can be done to reduce the likelihood of a reoccurrence. Some options are briefly discussed below but would require further study to determine feasibility and to assess costs, benefits and potential implications.

Safety Boom

A safety boom is being designed to keep watercraft from approaching the hazards posed by Orr Dam. This has been recommended in dam safety and public safety around dams reports. Debris accumulation at the recently installed safety boom at Fanshawe Dam has shown it to be an effective barrier to keep debris from reaching the spillway. The Fanshawe Dam safety boom was not specifically designed to keep debris from the spillway but adjusting the design of the safety boom for Orr Dam to be better optimized for debris is likely an opportunity to reduce the potential for a recurrence. Irrespective of the consideration of other alternatives, this is something that should be pursued prior to safety boom construction.

Debris Management within the Parks

The parks around Lake Victoria are very actively maintained recreational spaces unlike the more natural spaces around most of our reservoirs. As such, the debris loading to Lake Victoria is likely much less than would be natural around a reservoir. Debris

management within the parks could consider both seasonal and routine efforts. Increasing efforts within Stratford Parks to reduce debris loading to the lake may further reduce the potential for a recurrence, but it should be understood that it would not likely be feasible to pick up every twig that falls into the water. Opportunities and costs to reduce the debris loading can be assessed against the likelihood that it reduces the risk of a similar occurrence.

This is not something that the UTRCA would be able to undertake, however it is a consideration for the city as the owner of the properties around the reservoir.

Debris Management at the Dam

The city undertakes routine inspections of the dam. As part of this inspection debris observations and removal may be undertaken. Increasing the frequency of the inspection to weekly would allow more woody debris to be removed while it is still floating. The purchase of equipment to be left at the dam to facilitate the removal of small woody material would also facilitate its timely removal. Identification of materials beyond the capabilities of inspection personnel could be communicated and removal plans for larger materials could be implemented.

Annual debris inspection and cleanout could also be considered. Rather than drawing the reservoir down below winter level, divers may be an effective alternative. Depending on the effectiveness of other alternatives implemented and the amount of material found through initial efforts, frequency could be appropriately reduced.

Alternative Gate Design

Underflow gates with their sill on the bottom of the reservoir, similar to the gates at Orr Dam, are prone to this type of problem. Infrequently operated gates may unknowingly allow debris to accumulate on the sill.

Alternative gate designs could be considered which are less prone to debris. Other types of gates which allow for flow over the gate are also easier to control to maintain a steady water level such as is desirable on Lake Victoria. These types of gates also have challenges which would have to be assessed and weighed against any potential benefits. This would be a relatively high-cost alternative and is not likely one which would be worth pursuing.

Annual Drawdown

Lake Victoria is drawn down to a winter level each November. This winter level was increased in the late eighties to facilitate winter recreation. In contrast, Mitchell Dam, a very similar structure, is drawn down completely each year. At Mitchell Dam, the gates are then left open all winter and spring allowing debris to flush through the dam with winter and spring runoff events. In addition to being better able to pass those winter/spring flows, this also prevents the accumulation of sediment in the forebay area. Drawing the reservoir down completely could have implications on reservoir aquatic life and winter recreational activities.

Trash Racks

Trash racks provide a physical barrier to debris preventing debris from being drawn into discharge works. These are generally seen on intakes for smaller discharge features such as valves and turbines which cannot pass debris. Gates of the size of Orr Dam can generally safely pass most of the debris during runoff events.

Installing trash racks of the size necessary to prevent the smaller woody materials from settling in the immediate forebay may become an impediment to safely pass flood flows through the dam as they are likely to become plugged during an event. Cleaning of the trash racks would become an ongoing operational cost and could require the installation of equipment to facilitate the cleaning.

Although this alternative may warrant some additional consideration it is not likely a viable alternative without additional measures to maintain flood discharge capabilities.

Further Consideration of Alternatives

These and other alternatives could be further considered through a study by consulting engineers. It is, however, important to understand that as a reservoir controlled by a dam there will always be the potential for future incidents. It is also important to understand that planned maintenance could also require the reservoir to be drawn down when it is normally maintained at its summer level. While past maintenance activities have been able to be undertaken without significant impact to the normal seasonal operation, this remains likely in the future. As a structure ages the nature of the maintenance work should be expected to increase in magnitude which may require a drawdown at times when the reservoir is normally at summer level. Required permitting in-water work may also dictate when maintenance work is permitted. Many of our reservoirs have had times in which adjustments to the seasonal operations have been necessary for maintenance of the dam or other infrastructure around the reservoirs.

All of these alternatives have significant costs associated with them. A more comprehensive assessment of alternatives and the relative costs would be prudent before making changes requiring capital expenditure or increasing dam or parks operating costs.

Next Steps

Planned next steps include:

1. Continue to fill the reservoir with the available flow as quickly as practical, while maintaining adequate flow downstream. Capture runoff from events and any pumped water if proposals to pump are successful in securing the necessary permits and implemented by others.
2. Provide this report to city staff and work with them to provide information to Stratford council.
3. Continue to assess opportunities and costs of optimizing safety boom for debris management through the ongoing design of the safety boom.

4. Discuss with city staff opportunities for enhanced debris management opportunities around the reservoir and at the dam and whether other alternatives are worth pursuing.
5. Plan for further debris management alternative assessment through future budget/project discussions with the city
6. Incorporate debris management into the Orr Dam Operational Plan currently being developed

Prepared and recommended by:

Chris Tasker, Manager, Water and Information Management

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Tracy Annett, General Manager
Date: August 26, 2025
File Number: BoD-08-25-55
Agenda #: 6.2
Subject: 2026 Preliminary Draft Budget

Recommendation

THAT the Board of Directors receive the 2026 Preliminary Draft Budget and direct staff to prepare the 2026 Draft Budget.

Discussion

Budget Development

In developing the 2026 Preliminary Draft Budget, staff considered the following:

- Requirement to fulfil the Conservation Authorities Act and regulations,
- The Board-approved Budgetary and Reserves Policies,
- Input from staff, Board members, and interest-holders in the development of the Draft UTRCA Strategic Plan,
- Cost of living adjustments and pay grid step increases,
- Inflationary trends apparent in the Consumer Price Index and actual experience in the purchases of goods and services, particularly trade contracting, engineering works, and other supplies,
- Multi-year contractual obligations and the impact on timing of spending,
- Operating, capital, and program pressures,
- Minister's direction to freeze conservation authority fees associated with planning, development, and permitting,
- Focus on internal efficiencies using technologies and cost control wherever possible, and
- Impacts on service delivery.

The UTRCA has used a conservative approach to spending, as well as proactive investigations into alternative sources of funding in 2025, in an effort to minimize financial impacts on member municipalities in 2026 and beyond.

The following items have informed the development of the 2026 budget:

- Staffing changes due to leaves and impending retirements,
- Unexpected capital project costs,

- Clean Water Act multi-year contract,
- Cost apportionment (levy) increase,
- Significant Canada Water Agency funding, and
- Anticipated reductions in other federal funding.

Operating Budget

The Preliminary Draft Budget projects a total operating surplus of \$913K, primarily due to campground operations.

Category 1 programs overall are projected to produce a surplus of \$122K resulting from an estimated \$99K of gains on the long-term investment portfolio. Consistent with the UTRCA's Budgetary and Reserves Policies, the gains will be segregated into the investment reserve. Part of the Category 1 surplus results from \$652K of essential corporate costs that will be absorbed by the Canada Water Agency funded phosphorus reduction program, which is a Category 3 program. Alternative funding for these corporate costs will be required when the program is completed in several years' time.

Category 2 programs are balanced and reflect a slight surplus which is planned to be used in subsequent years.

Category 3 programs, aside from the campgrounds, are currently projecting a deficit of \$236K. The campground and parks operations are projecting a surplus which will be used for capital improvements in those facilities, in accordance with the UTRCA's Budgetary and Reserves Policies.

Capital Budgets

The 2026 Preliminary Draft Budget includes updates to capital project costs and to entire capital projects that will now be deferred from 2025 to 2026 or beyond. Changes to capital projects can vary significantly in both timing and costs and may result in changes to the benefit-based levy required to fund each project. The Authority is sensitive to the financial impacts to member municipalities of benefit-based capital projects. UTRCA staff have been meeting with staff at each affected municipality to discuss the timing and phases of implementation.

The UTRCA continues to apply for alternative funding sources to offset capital costs to member municipalities. Approved funding and updated projects will be reflected in the 2026 Draft Budget to be presented to the Board in October.

The capital budget forecast for 2026 currently includes the following project spending:

- \$550,000 for the Pittock Conservation Area bridge project, of which the City of Woodstock is funding 50%,
- \$32,800 for watershed-wide water monitoring equipment,
- \$58,000 for IT equipment such as servers,
- \$440,000 for fleet vehicle and equipment replacements, and
- \$56,000 in land acquisition and disposition advanced costs.

The Capital Maintenance Levy of \$505,000 is currently set for the projects noted above. Expenses for land acquisition and disposition planning can be deferred until those land transactions are realized.

Campground expenditures of \$1,465,000 are planned. The campground reserve will absorb those costs over the lives of the newly rebuilt or acquired assets.

The water and erosion control structures capital project budget of \$6,446,000 indicates a surplus of \$450K. As these projects are undertaken as both time and resources are available, any surpluses are kept in reserve. The UTRCA maintains a discrete reserve for each structure as each has its specific funder(s). Any overage or shortfall arising from operations or capital projects remains dedicated to that structure's reserve.

Anticipated Impact on Municipal Support

The Conservation Authorities Act regulation outlines the following budget process:

1) identify program costs, 2) identify other sources of revenue, and 3) identify the levy required.

The 2026 Preliminary Draft Budget includes an average 6.7% MCVA-based levy increase and a decrease to benefit-based levies of 35.2%, which is due to capital projects rather than operations. The Category 3 municipal cost apportioning agreements are expected to see a 4.3% increase. This municipal funding is leveraged 12-fold to provide a greatly enhanced program to watershed residents. The Modified Current Value Assessment (MCVA) provided by the Province is embedded in the levy table in the budget package attached.

**Detailed Consolidated Information
2026**

	Revenues	Expenses	Net Budget	MCVA Based General	Benefit- based	Total Municipal Support
Cat. 1	13,035,240	12,913,147	122,093	7,333,094	1,607,095	8,940,189
Operating change	3.9%	1.3%		7.9%	14.6%	9.1%
Capital	867,500	1,136,800	-269,300	505,000		505,000
Capital WECS	6,896,519	6,446,000	450,519		3,183,769	3,183,769
	20,799,259	20,495,947	303,312	7,838,094	4,790,864	12,628,958
change	-18.6%	-20.4%	-241.7%	6.7%	-35.2%	-14.3%
Cat. 2	1,367,356	1,307,957	59,399			
Operating						
Cat. 3	8,302,426	8,539,161	-236,735	653,136		653,136
Operating change						4.3%
Campgrounds	5,657,830	4,689,444	968,386			
Operating change	5.3%	4.0%	11.9%			
Capital		1,465,000	-1,465,000			
	5,657,830	6,154,444	-496,614			
	36,126,871	36,497,509	-370,638	8,491,230	4,790,864	13,282,094
Staffing		158.65 FTE				

2025

	Revenues	Expenses	Net Budget	MCVA Based General	Benefit- based	Total Municipal Support
Cat. 1	12,549,021	12,747,417	-198,396	6,795,355	1,402,215	8,197,570
Operating						
Capital	662,500	1,140,600	-478,100	547,500		547,500
Capital WECS	12,332,881	11,870,500	462,381		5,988,381	5,988,381
	25,544,402	25,758,517	-214,115	7,342,855	7,390,596	14,733,451
Cat. 2	1,240,207	1,202,163	38,044			
Operating						
Cat. 3	8,911,728	9,095,790	-184,062	626,156		626,156
Operating						
Campgrounds	5,372,987	4,507,697	865,290			
Operating						
Capital	150,000	2,472,500	-2,322,500			
	5,522,987	6,980,197	-1,457,210			
	41,219,324	43,036,667	-1,817,343	7,969,011	7,390,596	15,359,607
Staffing		159.9 FTE				

Further Budget Refinement

Before the 2026 Draft Budget is presented in October, staff will continue to refine cost estimates, adding or deleting expected changes to revenues. The results of formal cost reviews will be available and may also refine estimates in some areas.

By October, staff will also have conducted an informal wage survey of other Conservation Authorities which will inform any proposed salary grid changes. The 2026 Preliminary Draft Budget includes a projected reduction of 1.25 FTE positions from the FTEs included in the 2025 Approved Budget. Considerable changes in many staff positions continue to occur in 2025, including retirements. These changes create the opportunity to restructure responsibilities and refine position descriptions to align with the Draft UTRCA Strategic Plan.

Summary

The attached 2026 Preliminary Draft Budget is provided for discussion. The input received will be used to further refine the budget, which will be presented at the October Board of Directors meeting in a more comprehensive draft budget package.

Recommended by:

Tracy Annett, General Manager / Secretary-Treasurer
Christine Saracino, Supervisor Finance
Jenna Allain, Manager Environmental Planning and Regulations
Tatianna Lozier, Manager Integrated Watershed Management (Acting)
Teresa Hollingsworth, Manager Community and Corporate Services
Chris Tasker, Manager Water and Information Management
Brent Verscheure, Manager Lands, Facilities and Conservation Areas

Attachments:

2026 Preliminary Draft Budget for Discussion

Preliminary Draft 2026 Budget

August 26, 2025



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Budget Development Schedule

March 2025

Staff initiate workplans for 2026 to predict budget needs.

May 2025

Board direction regarding budget concepts.

August 2025

Board direction regarding Preliminary Draft Budget, followed by municipal input sessions with senior staff.

October 2025

Draft Budget presented to Board.

November 2025 - February 2026

Municipal input sessions with senior staff and Draft Budget circulation to member municipalities.

January 2026

Board review of municipal comments and reconsideration of Draft Budget.

February 2026

Board review of Draft Budget and approval of Budget and Apportionment.

2026 Preliminary Draft Budget: Overview

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority's (UTRCA) 2026 Preliminary Draft Budget accurately reflects actual costs to support legislative requirements, local environmental needs, and municipal and public demands for service. The budget provided for discussion meets the requirements of the Budget and Apportionment Regulation (O.Reg. 402/22) and continues to use the Modified Current Value Assessment to apportion costs for general levy and benefit-based apportionment for water and erosion control structures.

The 2026 Preliminary Draft Budget separates the UTRCA's programs and services into three categories, consistent with Section 21 of the Conservation Authorities Act (CA Act) and as required by Mandatory Programs and Services Regulation O.Reg. 686/21:

- Category 1 - Mandatory programs and services defined in regulation that may be funded with municipal levy.
- Category 2 - Programs and services delivered at the request of a municipality, with funding secured through an agreement with the requesting municipality.
- Category 3 - Other programs and services that the Authority determines are advisable to implement within our watershed jurisdiction that are funded through cost apportionment agreements with participating municipalities and self-generated funding sources such as user fees, government and other agency grants, donations, etc.

What are the Mandatory Programs and Services?

- Planning and regulations
 - Regulations under the CA Act (Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits)
 - Planning advisory services to identify natural hazard, development servicing, and natural resource planning concerns

- Water management
 - Flood forecasting and warning
 - Infrastructure operations and maintenance
 - Mapping, studies, and information management
 - Climate change risk and mitigation
 - Low water response
 - Natural hazards outreach programs
- Land management
 - Lands management, risk, and enforcement
 - Lands strategy implementation
 - Public access on UTRCA lands for passive recreation
 - Natural heritage conservation on UTRCA lands
- Provincial water monitoring
- Drinking water source protection
- Watershed strategy implementation
- Essential corporate costs

Budget Development

In developing the 2026 Preliminary Draft Budget, staff considered the following:

- Requirement to fulfill the CA Act and regulations,
- The Board-approved Budgetary and Reserves Policies,
- Input from staff, Board members, and interest-holders in the development of the Draft UTRCA Strategic Plan,
- Cost of living adjustments and pay grid step increases,
- Inflationary trends apparent in the Consumer Price Index and actual experience in the purchases of goods and services, particularly trade contracting, engineering works, and other supplies,

- Multi-year contractual obligations and the impact on timing of spending,
- Operating, capital, and program pressures,
- Minister’s direction to freeze conservation authority fees associated with planning, development, and permitting,
- Focus on internal efficiencies using technologies and cost control wherever possible, and
- Impacts on service delivery.

The UTRCA has used a conservative approach to spending, as well as proactive investigations into alternative sources of funding

in 2025, in an effort to minimize financial impacts on member municipalities in 2026 and beyond.

The following items have informed the development of the 2026 budget:

- Staffing changes due to leaves and impending retirements,
- Unexpected capital project costs,
- Multi-year Clean Water Act contract,
- Cost apportionment (levy) increase,
- Significant funding from the Canada Water Agency, and
- Anticipated reductions in other federal funding.

Table 1. Summary of Operating Expenses and Funding Sources per Category

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Other Category 3 (Campgrounds)	Total
Total Operating Costs	\$12,913,147	\$1,307,957	\$8,539,161	\$4,689,444	\$27,449,710
Funding Sources					
Provincial Transfer Payment - CA Act	\$181,213	-	-	-	\$181,213
Provincial Contracts	977,165	-	\$179,155	-	1,156,320
Federal Grants and Contracts	131,990	-	5,445,356	-	5,577,345
Municipal Contracts	432,897	\$1,367,356	334,000	\$62,290	2,196,544
Self-generated Revenue	2,371,787	-	1,690,780	5,595,540	9,658,106
Municipal Levy	8,940,189	-	-	-	8,940,189
Municipal Cost Apportionment Agreements	-	-	653,136	-	653,136
Total Funding Sources	13,035,240	1,367,356	8,302,426	5,657,830	28,362,852
Surplus (Deficit)	\$122,093	\$59,399	(\$236,735)	\$968,386	\$913,143

Table 2. Operating Budget

	2026 Category 1	2026 Category 2	2026 Category 3	2026 Category 3 Campgrounds	2026 Total
Revenues					
Municipal Levy + Cost Apportionments (Category 3)	\$8,940,189	-	\$653,136	-	\$9,593,325
Municipal Contracts	432,897	\$1,367,356	334,000	\$62,290	2,196,544
Provincial Contracts	977,165	-	179,155	-	1,156,320
Federal Grants and Contracts	131,990	-	5,445,356	-	5,577,345
User Fees	929,985	-	827,025	5,409,870	7,166,880
Donations and Other Revenues	51,315	-	185,618	-	236,932
Investment Revenue	614,540	-	-	-	614,540
Municipal Levy amortized from deferrals	349,439	-	1,584	12,134	363,157
Provincial Transfer Payment - Conservation Authorities Act	181,213	-	-	-	181,213
Land Management Agreements	426,508	-	676,553	173,536	1,276,597
Total Revenues	13,035,240	1,367,356	8,302,426	5,657,830	28,362,852
Expenses					
Technical and Consulting Services	547,070	33,151	260,603	203,165	1,043,988
Computers and Communications	508,466	19,200	19,920	24,070	571,656
Fleet-related Expenses	172,250	-	1,425	2,250	175,925
Insurance and Risk Management	356,801	1,535	16,030	87,897	462,263
Property-related Expenses	726,291	51,975	579,441	864,774	2,222,481
Staff Travel, PD, PPE, Uniforms	195,794	16,450	45,330	50,461	308,035
Materials and Supplies	329,710	125,400	424,882	316,294	1,196,286
Other Expenses	31,120	-	3,604,080	-	3,635,200
Depreciation Expenses	1,390,006	-	21,026	172,819	1,583,851
Corporate Allocations	(2,142,992)	287,279	1,229,805	625,908	(0)
Wages and Benefits	10,798,631	772,967	2,336,620	2,341,806	16,250,024
Total Expenses	12,913,147	1,307,957	8,539,161	4,689,444	27,449,710
Surplus (Deficit)	\$122,093	\$59,399	(\$236,735)	\$968,386	\$913,143

Table 3. Capital Projects

Reserve	2026 Forecast Capital Project Budgets					2027 Forecast Capital Project Budgets			
	Levy	Other Funding	Expenditure	Net Projects	Notes	Levy	Other Funding	Expenditure	Net Projects
Land Transactions									
	-	-	\$56,000	(\$56,000)	To clear when land sales complete	-	-	-	-
Capital Asset Renewal Projects									
	\$505,000	\$362,500	1,080,800	(213,300)	Bridge project at PCA	\$185,000	\$427,000	\$821,000	(\$209,000)
Campground Projects									
	-	-	1,465,000	(1,465,000)	Moved roadwork from 2026 to 2025	-	-	1,480,000	(1,480,000)
Structure Reserves									
Fanshawe Dam	387,806	60,000	140,000	307,806	Surplus to cover 2024/2025 sump remediation	837,500	832,500	1,670,000	-
Wildwood Dam	240,000	125,000	325,000	40,000	Surplus to cover 2025 mould remediation	175,000	175,000	350,000	-
Pittock Dam	290,500	257,500	548,000	-		233,000	225,000	458,000	-
London Dykes	1,222,000	2,697,500	3,919,500	-		493,500	711,500	1,205,000	-
St Marys Floodwall	25,000	25,000	50,000	-		27,500	27,500	55,000	-
Stratford Channel	10,000	10,000	20,000	-		70,000	70,000	140,000	-
RT Orr Dam	686,713	271,500	843,000	115,213	Phase gate painting and repairs over years	37,500	37,500	75,000	-
Mitchell Dam	166,250	166,250	332,500	-		515,000	515,000	1,030,000	-
Harrington Dam	17,500	25,000	55,000	(12,500)		50,000	50,000	100,000	-
Embryo Dam	60,000	-	60,000	-		40,000	-	40,000	-
Fullarton Dam	-	-	-	-		60,000	60,000	120,000	-
Shakespeare Dam	-	-	-	-		45,000	45,000	90,000	-
Dorchester CA Dam	-	-	-	-		37,500	37,500	75,000	-
Dorchester Mill Pond Dam	30,000	30,000	60,000	-		52,500	52,500	105,000	-
Centreville Dam	48,000	45,000	93,000	-		116,000	105,000	221,000	-
	3,183,769	3,712,750	6,446,000	450,519		2,790,000	2,944,000	5,734,000	-
Total	\$3,688,769	\$4,075,250	\$9,047,800	(\$1,283,781)		\$2,975,000	\$3,371,000	\$8,035,000	(\$1,689,000)

Table 4. Municipal Levies

Municipality	General Distribution Rates - Operating and Capital (See Table 5. Municipal Levies Detail: MCVA General Distribution)							Benefit-based Distribution Rates** - Operating and Capital (See Table 6. Municipal Levies: Benefit-based Distribution)							
	Clean Water Act	Conservation Authorities Act	Clean Water Act		Conservation Authorities Act		Category 1 Levy: General Distribution	Structure 100% (Single Benefitting Municipality)	Wildwood Dam (London 80%, St Marys 14%, all municipalities 6% MCVA)		Pittock Dam (Oxford County 61.1%, London 32.9%, all municipalities 6% MCVA)		Category 1 Levy: Benefit-based Distribution	Category 1 Mandatory Program Levy	
			2025 MCVA %	2025 MCVA %	2026 CVA %	2026 Levy			2026 MCVA %	2026 Levy	Total	Structure			2026 Levy
Oxford County	16.9550	17.0065	17.0209	-	17.0724	\$1,338,152	\$1,338,152	Ingersoll Channel	\$30,150	1.0243	\$6,339	62.1243	\$354,730	\$391,219	\$1,729,371
London	63.8549	64.0489	63.8410	-	64.0342	5,019,058	5,019,058	Fanshawe Dam	954,806	83.8421	518,865	36.7420	209,797	2,959,768	7,978,826
								London Dykes	1,270,500	-	-	-	-	-	-
								Springbank Dam	5,800	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lucan Biddulph	0.3554	0.3565	0.3589	-	0.3600	28,213	28,213	-	-	0.0216	134	0.0216	123	257	28,470
Thames Centre	3.2362	3.2460	3.1887	-	3.1983	250,688	250,688	Dorchester CA Dam	625	0.1919	1,188	0.1919	1,096	37,408	288,097
								Dorchester Mill Pond Dam	34,500	-	-	-	-	-	-
Strathroy-Caradoc*	0.3029		0.3016	-				-	-						
Middlesex Centre	2.4647	2.4722	2.4761	-	2.4836	194,669	194,669	-	-	0.1490	922	0.1490	851	1,773	196,442
Stratford	7.1492	7.1709	7.1437	-	7.1653	561,622	561,622	RT Orr Dam	766,713	0.4299	2,661	0.4299	2,455	802,858	1,364,481
								Stratford Channel	31,030	-	-	-	-	-	-
Perth East	1.4085	1.4128	1.4135	-	1.4178	111,127	111,127	Shakespeare Dam	1,030	0.0851	526	0.0851	486	2,042	113,169
West Perth	1.4573	1.4617	1.4531	-	1.4575	114,243	114,243	Fullarton Dam	15,500	0.0875	541	0.0875	499	262,791	377,034
								Mitchell Dam	246,250	-	-	-	-	-	-
St Marys	1.4585	1.4630	1.4651	-	1.4696	115,185	115,185	St Marys Floodwall	94,000	14.0882	87,186	0.0882	503	181,690	296,875
Perth South	1.1556	1.1591	1.1363	-	1.1397	89,332	89,332	-	-	0.0684	423	0.0684	390	814	90,145
South Huron	0.2018	0.2024	0.2010	-	0.2016	15,805	15,805	-	-	0.0121	75	0.0121	69	144	15,949
Zorra	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Embro Dam	79,000	-	-	-	-	101,500	101,500
								Harrington Dam	22,500					-	-
South-West Oxford	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Centreville Dam	48,600					48,600	48,600
Total	100	100	100	-	100	\$7,838,094	\$7,838,094		\$3,601,004	100	\$618,860	100	\$571,000	\$4,790,864	\$12,628,958

* Strathroy-Caradoc is currently excluded from the UTRCA's jurisdiction by Order-in-Council.

**The UTRCA uses a benefit-based method to apportion the operating expenses and capital costs for the water control structures it operates and maintains. The local share of the costs (after reduction by available funding from senior government or other sources) is apportioned based on the benefit to the municipalities. For Fanshawe, Wildwood, and Pittock Dams, the shared benefit was determined when the funding for construction of the structures was discussed. For all other structures, the municipality where each structure is located is the sole beneficiary and, therefore, covers all the local share of operating and maintenance costs.

This approach is consistent with how these costs have been apportioned in the past and is described in the Conservation Authorities Act Regulations (Ontario Regulation 402/22 Section 7(6)).

Table 5. Municipal Levies Detail: MCVA General Distribution

Category 1 Mandatory Programs	Expenses	Municipal Support
Environmental Planning and Regulations		
- Regulations under S28.1 Natural Hazards	\$1,408,349	\$874,000
- Planning Activities	1,220,563	787,280
Water Management		
- Flood Forecasting and Warning	661,000	535,640
- Infrastructure Operations and Maintenance (see Table 6. Municipal Levies Detail: Benefit-based Distribution)	1,724,904	1,268
- Mapping, Studies, and Information Management	1,408,655	1,326,000
- Climate Change Risk and Mitigation	276,474	163,822
- Low Water Response	11,371	11,440
- Natural Hazards Outreach Programs	520,098	358,644
Land Management		
- Lands Management (Risk, Enforcement, Encroachment)	975,915	753,400
- Lands Strategy Implementation (including Acquisition and Disposition)	18,299	-
- Public Access for Passive Recreation (see Table 6. Municipal Levies Detail: Benefit-based Distribution)	1,553,700	895,000
- Natural Heritage Conservation on UTRCA Lands	323,345	128,300
Provincial Water Monitoring	212,878	196,500
Drinking Water Source Protection	540,251	-
Watershed Management Strategy Implementation	257,897	167,000
Essential Corporate Costs	1,799,448	1,134,800
Total Operating Levy	12,913,147	7,333,094
Capital Maintenance Levy (not flood control related)	2,569,000	505,000
Total Costs to Levy (MCVA General Distribution)	\$15,482,147	\$7,838,094

Table 6. Municipal Levies Detail: Benefit-based Distribution

Structure	Passive Recreation: Dam Operation and Maintenance	Infrastructure Operation and Maintenance: Flood Control Structures - Operating, Routine and Preventative Maintenance	Infrastructure Operation and Maintenance: Capital Repairs and Environmental Assessments	Benefit-based Total for Structures
Fanshawe Dam	-	\$567,000	\$387,806	\$954,806
Wildwood Dam	-	378,860	240,000	618,860
Pittock Dam	-	280,500	290,500	571,000
London Dykes	-	48,500	1,222,000	1,270,500
St. Marys Floodwall	-	69,000	25,000	94,000
Ingersoll Channel	-	30,150	-	30,150
Stratford Channel	-	21,030	10,000	31,030
Springbank Dam	\$5,800	-	-	5,800
RT Orr Dam	80,000	-	686,713	766,713
Mitchell Dam	80,000	-	166,250	246,250
Harrington Dam	5,000	-	17,500	22,500
Embro Dam	19,000	-	60,000	79,000
Fullarton Dam	15,500	-	-	15,500
Shakespeare Dam	1,030	-	-	1,030
Dorchester CA Dam	625	-	-	625
Dorchester Mill Pond Dam	4,500	-	30,000	34,500
Centreville Dam	600	-	48,000	48,600
Total Levies for Structures under Benefit-based Distribution	\$212,055	\$1,395,040	\$3,183,769	\$4,790,864

Table 7. Year over Year Comparison of Total Municipal Contributions

Municipality	2025						2026					
	2025 MCVA %	General MCVA Distribution (Operating and Capital)	Benefit-based Distribution (Operating and Capital)	Total Levy Category 1	General MCVA Distribution (Operating programs) Category 3 Cost Apportionment	Total Municipal Support	2026 MCVA %	General MCVA Distribution (Operating and Capital)	Benefit-based Distribution (Operating and Capital)	Total Levy Category 1	General MCVA Distribution (Operating programs) Category 3 Cost Apportionment	Total Municipal Support
Oxford County	17.0065	\$1,248,765	\$196,196	\$1,444,961	\$106,487	\$1,551,448	17.0724	\$1,338,152	\$391,219	\$1,729,371	\$111,506	\$1,840,877
London	64.0489	4,703,017	5,988,369	10,691,386	401,046	11,092,432	64.0342	5,019,058	2,959,768	7,978,826	418,230	8,397,056
Lucan Biddulph	0.3565	26,179	260	26,439	2,232	28,671	0.3600	28,213	257	28,470	2,351	30,821
Thames Centre	3.2460	238,349	23,865	262,214	20,325	282,539	3.1983	250,688	37,408	288,096	20,889	308,985
Strathroy Caradoc	-	-	-	0	-	0	-	-	-	0	-	0
Middlesex Centre	2.4722	181,530	1,801	183,331	15,480	198,811	2.4836	194,669	1,773	196,442	16,221	212,663
Stratford	7.1709	526,548	297,946	824,494	44,901	869,395	7.1653	561,622	802,858	1,364,480	46,799	1,411,279
Perth East	1.4128	103,741	6,029	109,770	8,846	118,616	1.4178	111,127	2,042	113,169	9,260	122,429
West Perth	1.4617	107,331	369,629	476,960	9,153	486,113	1.4575	114,243	262,791	377,034	9,520	386,554
St Marys	1.4630	107,423	200,379	307,802	9,161	316,963	1.4696	115,185	181,690	296,875	9,598	306,473
Perth South	1.1591	85,113	845	85,958	7,258	93,216	1.1397	89,332	814	90,146	7,444	97,590
South Huron	0.2024	14,860	147	15,007	1,267	16,274	0.2016	15,799	144	15,943	1,317	17,260
Zorra	-	-	49,000	49,000	-	49,000	-	-	101,500	101,500	-	101,500
South-West Oxford	-	-	38,629	38,629	-	38,629	-	-	48,600	48,600	-	48,600
Total	100	\$7,342,856	\$7,173,095	\$14,515,951	\$626,156	\$15,142,107	100	\$7,838,088	\$4,790,864	\$12,628,952	\$653,136	\$13,282,088
Change from previous year								6.7%	-33%	-13%	4.3%	-12%

Notes:

1. Special benefitting rates are structure-specific to the beneficiary municipality(s).
2. General distribution rates are applied to watershed-wide programs and services.

Table 8. Category 1 Operating Budget

Category 1 includes the programs and services that the Province of Ontario has deemed mandatory for a Conservation Authority to deliver.

Funding

- The CA is permitted to levy their member municipalities for the full cost of delivering these mandated programs and services. The UTRCA uses revenues from agricultural leases, interest earned on investments, and internal program chargeback recoveries by allocating costs, to reduce the levy impact on member municipalities.
- All corporate costs may be included as Category 1 (i.e., eligible for full levy funding) but UTRCA is allocating program-specific costs to programs and services in all three categories. Essential corporate costs that are not program-specific are included as a grouping within Category 1 below.

Expenses by Type	Enviromental Planning and Regulations	Water Management	Land Management	Provincial Water Monitoring	Drinking Water Source Protection	Watershed Management Strategy	Essential Corporate Costs	Total Category 1
Technical and Consulting Services	\$55,500	\$41,340	\$41,288	\$3,000	\$150,960	\$6,500	\$248,482	\$547,070
Computers and Communications	23,000	101,535	24,344	2,000	35,599	1,250	320,738	508,466
Fleet-related Expenses	-	-	-	-	-	-	172,250	172,250
Insurance and Risk Management	4,334	48,222	33,677	2,220	-	1,110	267,238	356,801
Property-related Expenses	1,000	145,276	227,910	-	-	5,500	346,605	726,291
Staff Travel, PD, PPE, Uniforms	17,800	20,374	31,795	-	6,485	1,750	117,590	195,794
Materials and Supplies	200	65,513	63,697	2,500	200	14,450	183,150	329,710
Other Expenses	-	6,970	-	-	-	750	23,400	31,120
Depreciation Expenses	-	639,366	168,200	-	-	-	582,439	1,390,006
Corporate Allocations	506,224	696,413	432,367	60,343	54,981	63,277	(3,956,597)	(2,142,992)
Wages and Benefits	2,020,855	2,715,875	1,847,980	142,815	292,026	284,928	3,494,152	10,798,631
Total Operating Expenses	\$2,628,912	\$4,480,884	\$2,871,259	\$212,878	\$540,251	\$379,516	\$1,799,448	\$12,913,147

Table 9. Category 2 Operating Budget

Category 2 programs and services are delivered at cost to specific municipalities under contract.

Funding

- Delivered at cost to specific municipalities under contract (cannot be funded through levy).

Expenses by Type	City of London Water Quality Monitoring	City of London Environmentally Significant Areas / Lands Management	Drinking Water Source Protection Risk Management	Total Category 2
Technical and Consulting Services	-	\$2,500	\$30,651	\$33,151
Computers and Communications	-	3,400	15,800	19,200
Fleet-related Expenses	-	-	-	-
Insurance and Risk Management	-	-	1,535	1,535
Property-related Expenses	-	51,175	800	51,975
Staff Travel, PD, PPE, Uniforms	-	15,050	1,400	16,450
Materials and Supplies	\$2,000	123,400	-	125,400
Other Expenses	-	-	-	-
Depreciation Expenses	-	-	-	-
Corporate Allocations	26,975	224,207	36,097	287,279
Wages and Benefits	72,311	572,318	128,339	772,967
Total Operating Expenses	\$101,286	\$992,049	\$214,622	\$1,307,957

Table 10. Category 3 Operating Budget

Category 3 programs and services are those that a Conservation Authority determines are advisable to provide to further the purpose of the Conservation Authorities Act.

Funding

- Multiple funding sources including municipal support through cost apportioning agreements (cannot be funded through levy) (see Table 11).
- Category 3 programs and services are funded largely through contracts and grants, most of which require some financial support from municipalities.
- The budget reflects significant funding from the Canada Water Agency for phosphorus reduction programs.

Expenses by Type	Land Lease Management	Community Partnerships and Education	Land Stewardship Programs	Water Quality Database Management	Ecological Monitoring	Total Category 3
Technical and Consulting Services	\$44,500	\$13,660	\$97,800	\$93,080	\$11,563	\$260,603
Computers and Communications	2,100	4,720	5,450	(1,081)	8,731	19,920
Fleet-related Expenses	525	-	900	-	-	1,425
Insurance and Risk Management	11,258	2,225	2,402	-	145	16,030
Property-related Expenses	316,831	27,260	230,350	-	5,000	579,441
Staff Travel, PD, PPE, Uniforms	7,025	8,080	18,700	800	10,725	45,330
Materials and Supplies	37,152	99,355	276,175	-	12,200	424,882
Other Expenses	8,000	18,580	3,547,500	-	30,000	3,604,080
Depreciation Expenses	14,528	-	-	4,914	1,584	21,026
Corporate Allocations	34,870	189,771	870,712	11,358	123,094	1,229,805
Wages and Benefits	211,615	620,926	1,104,701	39,400	359,977	2,336,620
Total Operating Expenses	\$688,405	\$984,577	\$6,154,690	\$148,471	\$563,019	\$8,539,161

Table 11. Category 3 Municipal Cost Apportioning Agreements

Municipality	2025 MCVA %	2026 MCVA %	Category 3 Cost Apportionment
Oxford County	17.0065	17.0724	\$111,506
London	64.0489	64.0342	418,230
Lucan Biddulph	0.3565	0.3600	2,351
Thames Centre	3.2460	3.1983	20,889
Strathroy Caradoc	-	-	0
Middlesex Centre	2.4722	2.4836	16,221
Stratford	7.1709	7.1653	46,799
Perth East	1.4128	1.4178	9,260
West Perth	1.4617	1.4575	9,520
St Marys	1.4630	1.4696	9,598
Perth South	1.1591	1.1397	7,444
South Huron*	0.2024	0.2016	1,317
Zorra	-	-	0
South-West Oxford	-	-	0
Total	100	100	\$653,136

*Municipality of South Huron is not participating in Category 3 programs.

Table 12. Other Category 3 (Campground Operations) Operating Budget

Campground operations are also Category 3 programs and services but are not included in municipal cost apportioning agreements as their funding is self-generated.

Expenses by Type	Cost
Technical and Consulting Services	\$203,165
Computers and Communications	24,070
Fleet-related Expenses	2,250
Insurance and Risk Management	87,897
Property-related Expenses	864,774
Staff Travel, PD, PPE, Uniforms	50,461
Materials and Supplies	316,294
Other Expenses	-
Depreciation Expenses	172,819
Corporate Allocations	625,908
Wages and Benefits	2,341,806
Total Operating Expenses	\$4,689,444

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Christine Saracino, Supervisor of Finance and Accounting
Date: August 26, 2025
File Number: BoD-08-25-56
Agenda #: 8.1
Subject: 2025 Mid-Year Financial Update and Revised Budget

Recommendation

That the Board of Directors receive the reports attached for information.

Discussion

Attached are the Mid-Year Operating Statement and Statement of Financial Position, both dated July 31, 2025.

Operating Statement

The Operating Statement attached describes the results of operating activities during 2025 by category of program. Our revenues in total are running to target with some slight adjustments being recorded. The levy figure in the top line is the loose guide – with 58% of the year completed, any other figure below 58% would indicate either a shortfall, or slower than equal trending. For example, the user fee revenue category is 77% which, while higher than 58%, is not abnormal. Camping fees are generally paid in advance. The Municipal Contracts category is 51%, which again is not abnormal. Government grants are normally recorded quite sporadically throughout the year. The Municipal contracts category shows a slightly higher budget forecast due to a change of revenues originating from Conservation Ontario and other CAs which had been erroneously classed in the category of Land Management Agreements. Investment revenue is proving to be slightly higher than expected for 2025 and the WSIB bonus received earlier in the year would lead the “other” category to see higher revenues than originally anticipated. Some donations received will be deferred into 2026.

Expenses are currently slightly below budget thus far in 2025. Typically, fall spending is slightly higher than summer levels and has yet to occur. In addition, there are significant grants still to be issued in 2025. We anticipate some small savings in the wage category because of shifting FTEs, position changes, and delayed new hiring during 2025, but those small savings will likely be offset by higher-than-expected prices on supplies and additional staff-related costs added to the forecast at this time.

Statement of Financial Position

The Statement of Financial Position, in the second attachment reflects all the balances of our permanent accounts. All balances are within expected results and are unremarkable.

Capital Project Updates

The WCA roads refurbishment project was approved at \$400K for 2025. That project is now completed at a final cost of \$478K which includes the paving of an additional section and pulverizing and regrading of a second additional section.

We also report that the approved budget for road work at FCA campground was originally planned to be phased in (2025: \$300K and 2027: \$300K). Based on our recent experience with road repaving, it is now deemed desirable to complete this project entirely in the fall of 2025 immediately following closure of the campground. It now has a total estimated cost of \$700K, dependent on the final count of speedbumps and width of road in one section which is currently under discussion. That RFP will shortly be issued.

Furthermore, we now have estimated costs for the sump repair at Fanshawe Dam from last summer's event, and the unexpected mould remediation project at Wildwood Dam. Both are included in the 2026 Preliminary draft budget. Both those projects are proceeding in late 2025 and early 2026.

Summary

The Mid-Year operating summary reflects that revenues are on target while expenses are slightly below budgeted amounts, which is typical at this time of year. Overall, the budgeted surplus in operations should be marginally better than originally forecast by the year's end. The surplus is expected to materialize in campground activities as the weather has been good, and sites are well booked. All balances shown on the Financial Position are within expected results at midyear.

Recommended by:

Christine Saracino, Supervisor, Finance and Accounting
Tracy Annett, General Manager / Secretary-Treasurer

Attachments:

- 1) Operating Statement to July 31, 2025
- 2) Statement of Financial Position at July 31, 2025

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Statement of Operations to July 31, 2025

	Category 1		Category 2		Category 3		Campgrounds		Total	YTD of Budget	Approved Budget	Forecast Budget	Change	Notes
	YTD Actual	Budget	YTD Actual	Budget	YTD Actual	Budget	YTD Actual	Budget	YTD Actual					
REVENUES:														
Municipal Levy + Cost Apportionments	4,781,916	8,197,570	-	-	364,519	626,156	-	-	5,146,434	58%	8,823,726	8,824,820		
Municipal Levy amortized from deferrals	306,105	282,212	-	-	21,101	1,584	18,811	-	346,017	122%	283,796	283,796		
Provincial Transfer Payment - CA Act	181,213	181,213							181,213	100%	181,213	181,213		
Provincial Transfer Payment - Clean Water Act	349,893	489,537							349,893	71%	489,537	489,537		
Municipal Contracts	271,992	415,967	597,952	1,240,207	183,810	317,000	62,290	75,000	1,050,316	51%	2,048,175	2,218,065	8%	Add'l muni.partners added
Provincial Contracts	512,488	601,848	-	-	111,600	180,600	-	-	624,088	80%	782,448	784,052		
Federal Grants and Contracts	(104,929)	188,236	-	-	2,057,937	6,139,538	-	-	1,953,007	31%	6,327,773	6,342,983		
Land Management Agreements	445,998	430,913	-	-	345,896	717,006	108,372	104,435	900,267	77%	1,252,353	1,209,415	-3%	
User Fees	575,003	1,076,573	5,000	-	650,353	836,345	4,247,177	5,193,552	5,477,533	77%	7,106,469	7,018,094	-1%	
Donations and Other	221,840	46,702	-	-	102,484	93,500	-	-	324,324	231%	140,202	214,062	53%	Received WSIB Bonus in '25
Investment Revenue	252,494	638,250	-	-			-	-	252,494	40%	638,250	673,250	5%	experiencing increases
TOTAL REVENUES	7,794,013	12,549,021	602,952	1,240,207	3,837,700	8,911,728	4,436,650	5,372,987	16,671,315	59%	28,073,942	28,239,287	1%	
EXPENDITURES:														
Wages and Benefits	5,362,857	10,090,378	400,669	733,141	1,357,570	2,323,208	1,328,708	2,394,935	8,449,804	54%	15,541,661	15,347,947	-1%	FTE to reduce by .9 in 2026
Property Related	363,100	783,434	34,631	50,625	262,217	678,195	408,990	805,565	1,068,939	46%	2,317,819	2,373,019	2%	
Technical and Consulting Services	234,754	670,410	14,637	30,420	48,363	282,354	149,197	195,800	446,952	38%	1,178,984	1,199,478	2%	
Computers and Communications	324,914	496,375	3,372	16,100	43,846	24,119	17,142	22,850	389,274	70%	559,444	583,197	4%	
Insurance and Risk Management	233,684	392,083	960	2,000	9,402	16,696	49,598	117,075	293,643	56%	527,854	527,854		
Supplies	167,246	370,750	84,298	65,850	295,112	505,995	181,809	299,325	728,465	59%	1,241,920	1,309,626	5%	
Travel, other Personnel Expenses	85,219	182,560	9,937	20,250	17,625	30,240	24,581	49,723	137,362	49%	282,773	298,923	6%	
Fleet Related	78,602	200,600	-	-	-	1,315	24	3,250	78,626	38%	205,165	205,165		
Other Expenses	15,324	28,320	-	-	1,499,259	3,993,780	-	-	1,514,583	38%	4,022,100	4,047,487	1%	
Depreciation Expenses	982,245	1,497,266	-	-	12,265	21,026	97,531	157,054	1,092,041	65%	1,675,346	1,755,661	5%	Original estimate as low
Allocated Costs	(1,011,106)	(1,964,759)	173,453	283,777	541,683	1,218,863	300,995	462,120	5,024	5024000%	0	-		
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	6,836,839	12,747,417	721,958	1,202,163	4,087,342	9,095,790	2,558,574	4,507,697	14,204,712	52%	27,553,067	27,648,357	0%	
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	957,174	(198,397)	(119,005)	38,045	(249,642)	(184,062)	1,878,076	865,290	2,466,602	474%	520,876	590,930		
Depreciation Expense (added back)	982,245	1,497,266	-	-	12,265	21,026	97,531	157,054	1,092,041	65%	1,675,346	1,755,661		
CASH SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	1,939,418	1,298,869	(119,005)	38,045	(237,377)	(163,036)	1,975,607	1,022,345	3,558,643	162%	2,196,222	2,346,591		

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority
Statement of Financial Position and Accumulated Surplus (unaudited)
as at July 31, 2025

FINANCIAL ASSETS	Current Year	Prior Year	Notes
Cash and equivalents			
Bank Balances	4,977,734	2,253,594	Further investments made in August
Petty Cash, Floats and Advances	6,500	7,190	
Investments under 7 years	10,514,010	10,487,451	
PHN Investment Portfolio at cost	6,945,088	6,552,711	Market Value 31st July 2025 is \$8.733M
	<u>22,443,331</u>	<u>19,300,946</u>	
Receivable Amounts			
Accounts Receivable	3,509,842	3,520,184	
Federal Taxes Receivable	86,765	49,094	
Accrued Receivables	11,703	8,313	
	<u>3,608,310</u>	<u>3,577,590</u>	
	<u>26,051,642</u>	<u>22,878,537</u>	
FINANCIAL LIABILITIES			
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities			
Wage-related payables	966,691	1,033,048	
Federal Taxes Payable	61,808	63,313	
Accounts Payable	852,465	400,561	
Amounts held for other groups	4,166,806	3,545,331	Includes remaining levy in 2025
	<u>6,047,769</u>	<u>5,042,254</u>	
Deferred Revenues			
Funding carried forward temporarily	290,241	372,658	
Customer prepayments	70,875	16,875	
Advanced WECl funding	719,591	-	
Deferred and Committed Capital Funding	9,144,327	8,411,677	Will increase along with capital spending except for campground capital works
	<u>10,225,034</u>	<u>8,801,209</u>	
	<u>16,272,803</u>	<u>13,843,463</u>	
NET FINANCIAL ASSETS	<u>9,778,838</u>	<u>9,035,074</u>	
NON-FINANCIAL ASSETS			
Tangible Capital Assets	73,998,641	71,663,549	
less accumulated amortization	<u>(32,445,970)</u>	<u>(30,773,857)</u>	
Net tangible capital assets	41,552,671	40,889,692	
Capital projects in progress	8,820	8,931	
Prepaid Expenses, Deposits and Inventories	284,594	322,104	
Net Financial and Non-financial assets	<u>51,624,924</u>	<u>50,255,801</u>	
Equity in Tangible Capital Assets	40,848,078	40,331,502	
All other Equity	245,403	(2,264,738)	
Current year Surplus to date	2,239,923	2,840,183	
Reserves	8,291,520	9,330,003	
Accumulated Surplus	<u>51,624,924</u>	<u>50,236,949</u>	

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Tracy Annett, Teresa Hollingsworth
Date: August 26, 2025
File Number: BoD-08-25-57
Agenda #: 8.2
Subject: Strategic Plan Update

Recommendation

That the Board of Directors receive this report for information.

Background

In September 2023, the UTRCA Board of Directors directed staff to engage a consultant to develop an updated Strategic Plan to guide the organization over the next five years. Platinum Leadership, based in London, was retained to lead this initiative.

Discussion

As presented to the Board in May, Platinum Leadership undertook the following activities as part of the Strategic Planning process:

- Conducted a review of the UTRCA's strategic objectives, programs, and services within the current operating environment.
- Collected input from all staff and Board members through six staff engagement sessions.
- Developed *Discovery Report #1*, which compiled all staff input. This confidential report was provided to the UTRCA Board of Directors, circulated on November 20, 2024.
- Facilitated a Governance Workshop on November 21, 2024, with the Board of Directors and Senior Management Team, using *Discovery Report #1* to identify themes for updated Vision, Mission, and Values statements.
- Worked with staff writing team to develop draft Vision, Mission, and Values statements.
- Prepared the *Strategic Planning Vision, Mission, and Values Board Workshop Report* for review at the November 26, 2024, UTRCA Board meeting.

In December 2024, the Board approved the updated Vision, Mission, and Values, which have since been incorporated into the Watershed Management Strategy.

Since spring 2025, the consultant has worked with UTRCA staff and:

- Led a comprehensive engagement effort to collect input from member municipality, partner organizations, and client groups. This work included interviews and surveys with municipal staff, representatives from environmental and partner organizations, and Authority client groups. Current and past UTRCA Board members as well as staff who had not previously participated were also included to ensure broad representation. The summarized version of *Discovery Report #2 - Strategic Planning Interest-holder Consultation* is provided as an attachment to this report.
- It should be noted that formal engagement efforts did not specifically include Indigenous communities. The UTRCA recognizes the importance of first developing a comprehensive Indigenous engagement strategy and is working with Indigenous consultants to undertake sensitivity training for staff and Board members, to be followed by the development of a respectful engagement strategy. In the meantime, informal discussions are ongoing through established partnerships and relationships with Indigenous communities and individuals, including through the Shared Waters Approach initiative.
- Facilitated a workshop with the senior staff and Management Team to prioritize strategic objectives and organizational goals. The session addressed both short and long-term objectives and identified potential approaches for achieving them. It also explored potential metrics to evaluate the success of the Strategic Plan implementation.
- Based on the workshop results, the consultants worked with the staff writing team to develop four Priority Areas, each with clear Goal Statements and defined approaches to achieve the identified goals. Senior staff were given an opportunity to provide further feedback to inform the draft Strategic Plan.
- All staff were circulated the draft for any additional feedback on the strategy to ensure nothing was missed.

Timeline

- Phase 1 – October to December 2024: Board and employee engagement with a focus on Organizational Governance and the identification of Vision, Mission, and Values.
- Phase 2 – February and March 2025: Survey and interview questions finalized, and comprehensive interest holder consultation contact list developed.
- Phase 3 – April and May: Interest holder engagement.
- Phase 4 – June to September: Report on the interest-holder consultations completed and used to inform the development of priorities, goals, and approaches.
- Phase 5 – August: Board of Directors receive Draft Strategic Plan for discussion.
- Phase 6 – September: Board of Directors receive updated Draft Strategic Plan.
- Phase 7 – October to December: Management Team and senior staff use the approved plan to develop operational planning of strategies, key actions, timelines, resources, and project leads that align with the 2026 Draft Budget.

The UTRCA has made it a priority to engage staff, Board members, and the watershed community. The Draft Strategic Plan reflects the diverse voices, ideas, and feedback that were heard throughout the process.

Summary

With the support of Platinum Leadership, the UTRCA has developed a Draft Strategic Plan through a comprehensive and collaborative engagement process. The draft plan involved extensive consultation, including interviews and surveys with past and present UTRCA Board members, municipal staff, representatives from environmental and partner organizations, and Authority clients. The feedback gathered through these efforts directly informed the development of UTRCA's strategic priorities and goals.

The draft plan is provided to the Board members at this time for discussion. Any comments received will be considered as the strategic plan is finalized.

Recommended by:

Tracy Annett, General Manager

Teresa Hollingsworth, Manager of Community and Corporate Services

Attachments:

Draft Strategic Plan

Discovery Report #2: Strategic Planning Interest-holder Consultations

UPPER THAMES RIVER

CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Strategic Plan

2025-2030

Draft 10, August 12, 2025



Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Strategic Plan, 2025-2030

(draft 10, August 12, 2025)

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The Watershed and Traditional Territory

We acknowledge that the Upper Thames River watershed is within the traditional territory of the Attawandaron, Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Lunaapeewak peoples, who have deep, longstanding, and intrinsic relationships to the land, water, plants, and animals of southwestern Ontario.

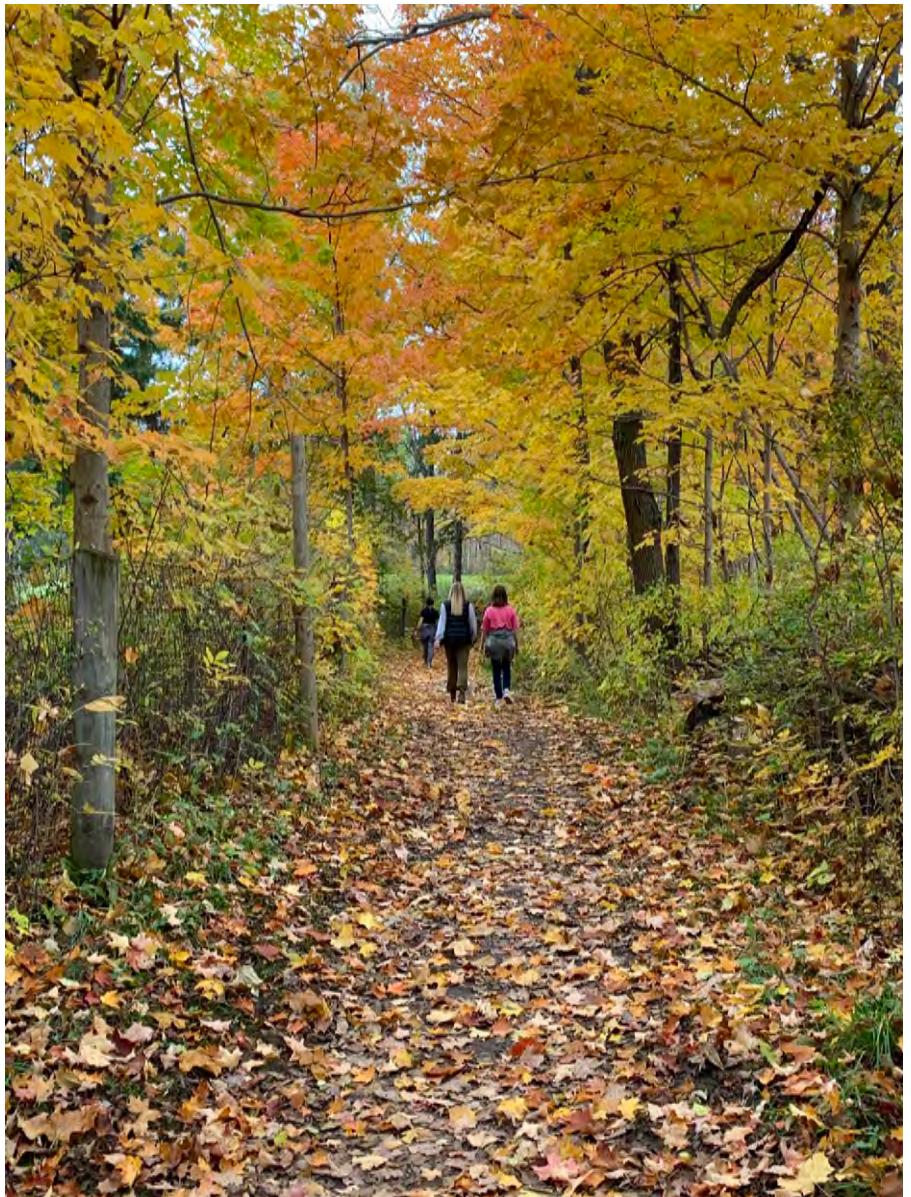
We acknowledge the First Nation communities within the Thames River watershed who are connected to and by the Thames River. These nations include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, Munsee Delaware Nation, and Delaware Nation at Moraviantown. In the region, there are 11 First Nation communities and a growing and diverse Indigenous urban population.

We acknowledge and respect local and regional First Nations as original, contemporary, and future caretakers of this watershed, and we are committed to working alongside Indigenous peoples from across the region and Turtle Island to strengthen relationships, honour treaty rights, and improve watershed health.

Acknowledgements

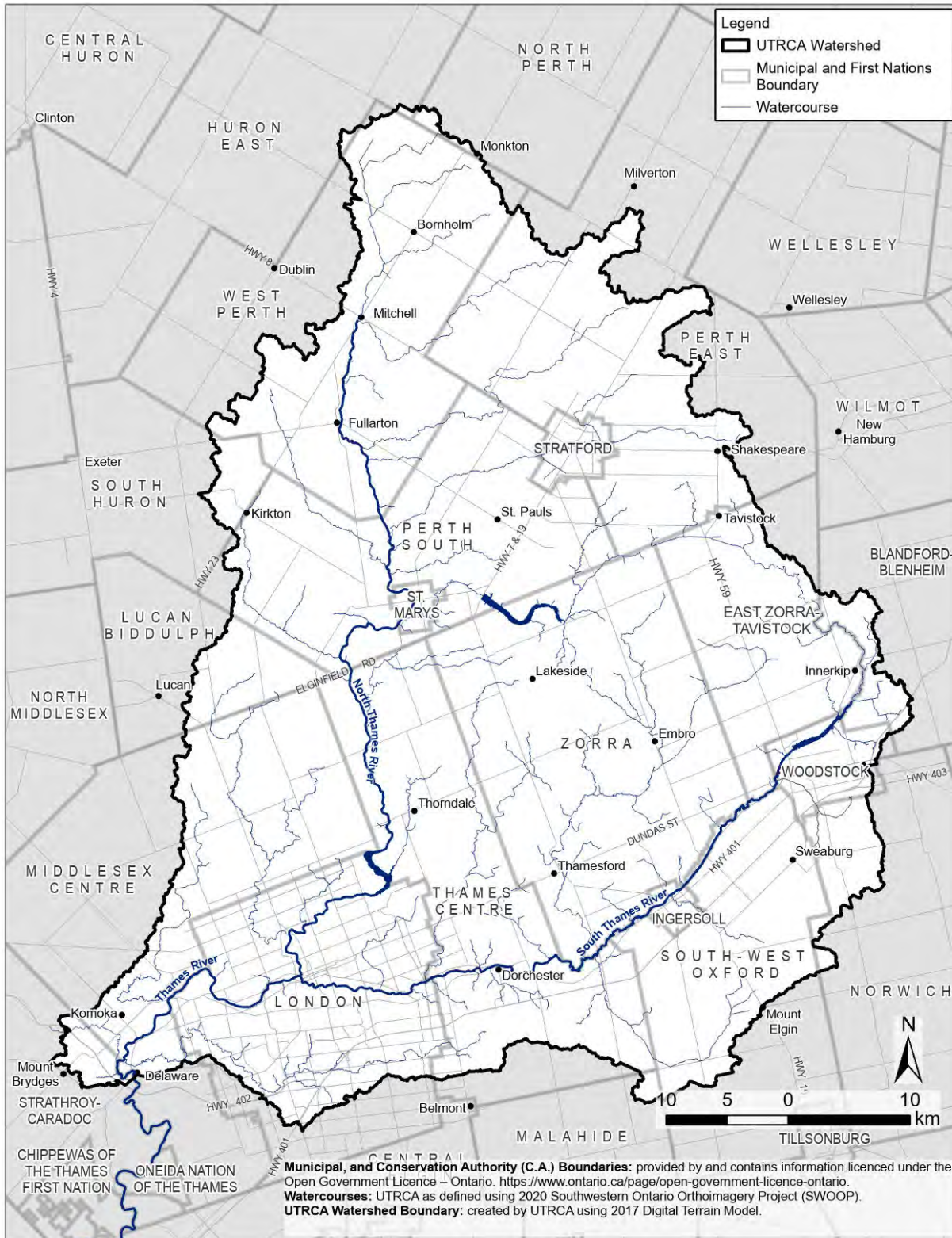
Strategic planning is both a reflection of where we are and a vision of where we are going. The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority's (UTRCA) new plan is the result of a collaborative process enriched by those who live, work, and steward this watershed.

We extend our sincere thanks to all who participated – municipal partners, partner organizations, non-governmental organizations, community members, land development groups, other conservation authorities, school boards, and, of course, UTRCA employees, managers, and Board members past and present. We appreciate that you shared your experiences and perspectives. Together, you have helped chart a grounded and forward-focused course for UTRCA's future built on our shared vision for the local environment.



About the UTRCA

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) is a community-based environmental organization dedicated to achieving a healthy, resilient environment on behalf of the 17 municipalities in the Upper Thames River watershed (see map). A watershed is an area of land where all of the water drains into the same body of water, such as a stream, creek, river, or lake. Our area of jurisdiction covers 3,430 square kilometres in southwestern Ontario and is home to approximately 600,000 people in a high-growth area of the province.



Watershed Management: An Integrated Approach

Ontario's 36 conservation authorities are governed by the *Conservation Authorities Act*, which is administered by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). The purpose of the Act is "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" (*Conservation Authorities Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. C.27). The Act was originally enacted in 1946, as conservation authorities began to be established, but has undergone amendments since then.

Since its inception in 1947, the UTRCA has developed a wide range of programs and services. The key areas of focus include:

- **Flood Forecasting, Warning, and Protection** - Monitoring and mitigating flood risks to safeguard communities and infrastructure.
- **Drinking Water Source Protection** - Ensuring the long-term safety and sustainability of local drinking water supplies.
- **Watershed Health, Science, and Monitoring** - Recommending and implementing science-based actions to maintain and improve watershed health.
- **Natural Areas and Recreation** - Preserving green spaces and promoting public access to nature for recreation and well-being.
- **Landowner Stewardship and Grants** - Supporting private landowners with resources and funding to enhance environmental practices.
- **Environmental Education and Community Engagement** - Fostering awareness and participation through educational programs and public involvement initiatives.
- **Planning Review, Permitting, and Mapping for Safe Development** - Reviewing planning applications, issuing permits, and producing maps to guide and facilitate development that is safe, sustainable, and environmentally responsible.



These programs and services fall within three categories, consistent with Section 21 of the *Conservation Authorities Act* and as required by the Mandatory Programs and Services Regulation (Ontario Regulation 686/21):

- **Category 1** - Mandatory programs and services defined in regulation that may be funded with municipal levy.
- **Category 2** - Programs and services delivered at the request of a municipality, with funding secured through an agreement with the requesting municipality.
- **Category 3** - Other programs and services that the UTRCA determines are advisable to implement within our watershed jurisdiction. These programs and services are funded through cost apportionment agreements with participating municipalities and self-generated funding sources such as user fees, government and other agency grants, donations, etc.

Current Operating Environment

The UTRCA's new Strategic Plan considers the environmental needs of the watershed and the priorities of communities and interest holders, while complying with legislative requirements and restrictions. It also addresses a range of complex and often conflicting influences shaping the organization's current operating environment, including:

- Ongoing and frequent changes in the legislation that governs conservation authorities.
- Funding uncertainties and limitations.
- Provincial downloading onto municipal governments, intensifying pressure on local budgets.
- Population growth, urban development, and the housing crisis.
- Economic instability and geopolitical uncertainty.
- Increasing impacts of a changing climate and extreme weather on the environment, communities, and natural hazard management.
- Growing demands on UTRCA-owned lands and evolving expectations for how they are managed.
- Changing demographics, especially in urban areas, and the need to increase inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.
- The need to respond meaningfully to the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- The transformative influence of social media and artificial intelligence on how people access information, form opinions, and make decisions.





Strategic Planning: Grounded in Purpose, Guided by Strategy

The UTRCA's work takes place within complex and ever-evolving environmental, social, and policy landscapes. To remain effective, forward-thinking, and responsive to change, the Authority has invested in strategic planning to guide the organization's efforts.

The strategic plan begins at the headwaters of who the UTRCA is - vision, mission, and values. These foundational elements shape the direction and flow of the work. As the plan progresses downstream, it defines clear priorities, goals, and actions that align programs, partnerships, and resources with meaningful impact.

By bridging the UTRCA's organizational roots with its aspirations for the future, this plan ensures next steps are grounded in purpose. It empowers the UTRCA to act collaboratively and effectively, while remaining flexible and responsive to emerging community and watershed needs.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision, mission, and values form the foundation of an organization, providing it with clarity, purpose, and direction.

- The vision outlines the organization’s long-term aspiration—what it ultimately seeks to achieve,
- The mission defines its core purpose and the work it does to bring its vision to life, and
- The values express the guiding principles and beliefs that shape its decisions, culture, and behaviour.

Together, they align the team, inform strategic priorities, and build trust with partners and the public by clearly communicating what the UTRCA stands for and where it is headed.



- **Vision:** Communities engaged in a healthy, resilient environment.
- **Mission:** To conserve and protect the watershed through science, education, policy, action, and experiences in nature.
- **Values:**
 - **Leadership** - We model and encourage sustainable, innovative stewardship of the watershed.
 - **Collaboration** - We partner to protect and promote a healthy environment and resilient communities.
 - **Integrity** - We act with transparency and accountability and root our work in science.

Strategic Priorities

The UTRCA's new strategic priorities reflect the evolving needs of the watershed and its communities. As environmental challenges grow more complex, it is essential to focus our efforts where they can make the greatest difference. These four new strategic priorities represent our collective vision in action, ensuring our efforts remain focused, collaborative, and responsive as we conserve, protect, and steward the natural systems that sustain the region.





Priority 1: Environmental Health

Goal: To build a thriving, healthy ecosystem by gathering and utilizing knowledge of the natural environment to guide the UTRCA's work and inspire action.

How we will pursue this goal:

- Strengthen environmental monitoring, data collection, and other ways of knowing to inform decision-making and action.
- Improve access to and understanding of environmental information through communication and education.
- Enable local stewardship by informing and supporting actions that protect and improve watershed health.
- Protect the watershed's ecological integrity by building connected natural systems and enhancing the UTRCA's network of conservation lands.



Priority 2: Watershed Resilience

Goal: To enhance the watershed's resilience and the ability of communities to adapt to a changing environment.

How we will pursue this goal:

- Build long-term resilience by taking action to strengthen the watershed in a way that supports both the environment and local communities.
- Proactively identify and manage natural hazards to protect people, property, and ecosystems while supporting safe development.
- Identify and manage threats to municipal drinking water sources.
- Model sustainability and resilience on the UTRCA's conservation lands.



Priority 3: Engagement and Collaboration

Goal: To strengthen relationships with watershed interest-holders and enhance environmental knowledge and understanding to inspire action on shared goals.

How we will pursue this goal:

- Deepen relationships and improve communication with municipalities, Indigenous communities, partners, newcomers, and other watershed residents.
- Enable local environmental action and volunteerism by facilitating community-led efforts and sharing expertise.
- Provide environmental education, including hands-on, outdoor experiences, to foster a conservation ethic in young people.
- Connect people with nature and green space to promote environmental awareness, education, appreciation, and action.



Priority 4: Organizational Excellence

Goal: To be a creative, adaptable, and trusted Conservation Authority.

How we will pursue this goal:

- Practice good governance through transparent decision-making, effective communications, and accountable results.
- Ensure long-term financial sustainability through sound fiscal practice, asset management, and diversified funding.
- Attract, develop, and support passionate, skilled employees in an inclusive, diverse, and collaborative workplace.
- Deliver high quality service and client-centred engagement.
- Strengthen communication and transparency in regulatory decisions to support a more responsive process for municipalities, developers, and watershed residents.
- Modernize digital tools to improve efficiency and make information and services easier to access for staff and the public.

Developing the new Strategic Plan

Developing a strategic plan that reflects the priorities, values, and realities of the Upper Thames River watershed requires listening, discernment, thoughtful planning, and wide engagement. From the outset, the UTRCA committed to a robust, transparent, and collaborative approach to strategic planning. The goal was to ensure that the voices of those connected to the watershed—including staff, municipalities, Board members, partners and interest-holders, and members of the public—were meaningfully reflected as we discerned the organization’s future direction.

The process unfolded over two phases—internal engagement and external engagement—and was structured to build understanding, foster consensus, and translate insights into strategic direction. More than 200 people provided input through focus groups, interviews, and online surveys. Participants included internal teams—employees, managers, and current and former members of the Board of Directors—as well as external interest-holders such as municipal partners, non-governmental organizations, partner agencies and organizations, school boards, land development representatives, conservation authority colleagues, and community members.

It should be noted that formal engagement efforts did not specifically include Indigenous communities as the UTRCA recognizes the importance of first developing a comprehensive Indigenous engagement strategy. The UTRCA is working with Indigenous consultants to undertake sensitivity training for staff and Board members, to be followed by the development of a respectful engagement strategy. In the meantime, informal discussions are ongoing through established partnerships and relationships with Indigenous communities and individuals, including through the Shared Waters Approach initiative.

The strategic planning process began in Fall 2024 with an internal analysis of the UTRCA’s operating environment, strengths, and areas for improvement. This phase included focus groups and surveys with staff, management, and the Board of Directors. It culminated with a planning workshop where Board members and the leadership team refreshed vision, mission, and values statements. These foundational elements were formally approved by the Board in December 2024.

Spring 2025 focused on external engagement. Through interviews and surveys, we gathered feedback from interest-holders across the watershed on UTRCA’s performance, opportunities for growth, and aspirations for the future. This listening phase brought forth new data for managers and program supervisors to examine as they met to determine the UTRCA’s strategic priorities and goals. The data and analysis affirmed that fostering environmental health, enhancing watershed resilience, strengthening collaboration and engagement, and encouraging organizational excellence are vital to our continued success.

Now, with Board approval of the new Strategic Plan, the UTRCA is shifting to implementation. Our strategic priorities and goals align with our legislative requirements, mandate, vision, mission, values, and capacity. They also align with the UTRCA’s Watershed Strategy (2024) as well as the Conservation Areas and Lands Strategy (2024). Strong operational plans will be developed, incorporating the work undertaken as part of these strategies. The plans will define specific activities, timelines, leaders, and success measures, ensuring we remain focused, agile, and accountable in supporting a healthy, resilient watershed for all.



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Discovery Report 2: Strategic Planning Interest-holder Consultations

Summarized Report

Original report prepared by Platinum Leadership Inc., June 1, 2025

Summarized report prepared by UTRCA, July 8, 2025

Summarized themed responses from Round 2 of Strategic Planning Interest-holder Consultation

Partner Groups, Municipal Partners, Board Members (current and former), Members of the Public, Other Conservation Authorities, Non-governmental Organizations, School Boards, Land Development Groups and Property Lessees

Please see Discovery Report 1, dated November 19, 2024, for Board, Manager, and Employee responses.

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Introduction

Platinum Leadership Inc. completed interest-holder consultation for the second round of the UTRCA's strategic planning, and presented findings to the UTRCA on June 1, 2025, in Discovery Report 2. Contributions were received from partner groups, municipal partners, Board members (current and former), members of the public, other Conservation Authorities, non-governmental organizations, school boards, and land development groups and property lessees. Responses were gathered through interviews and online surveys, anonymized for confidentiality, and organized by interest-holder group into key themes.

For this Summarized Discovery Report 2, the UTRCA retained only Platinum Leadership's concluding remarks for each question. The findings of the original Discovery Report 2 are unchanged. For UTRCA Board, Manager, and Employee responses, please see Discovery Report One (confidential), dated November 19, 2024.

Executive Summary

This interest-holder consultation suggests the UTRCA's top priorities for the next five years:

- Address the escalating risks of climate change, particularly through robust flood management strategies, updated hazard mapping, and investments in both natural and engineered resilience measures.
- Focus on protecting and improving water quality across the watershed.
- Enhance community engagement, public education, and collaborative partnerships with municipalities, landowners, and other interest-holders to foster shared responsibility and leverage collective action.
- Refine its regulatory processes to be both effective in protecting the environment and efficient in supporting responsible development,
- Ensure long-term financial sustainability and operational excellence.

These priorities are vital for safeguarding the watershed's ecological health, protecting communities from natural hazards, and maintaining public trust and support.

Research Methodology

A total of 95-99 interest-holders participated in this consultation between May 7-23, 2025. To ensure confidentiality and limit the release of personal information, online survey links were directly emailed to interest-holders from UTRCA to those potential respondents who were personally invited to participate. Members of the public were invited to participate and provided the survey link via the UTRCA's website and social media. While efforts were made to avoid or limit duplications, duplicate responses are possible if a respondent contributed to both an interview and online survey. It is anticipated any duplicate feedback is minimal and would not significantly impact results. Lastly, we note the information contained herein represents a 'window in time' and reflects, in part, the environments of the UTRCA and its interest-holders. As with any primary research, if the same questions were asked at a different time, some responses may be different, reflecting the realities and lived experiences of participants at a different 'window in time.'

Research Questions

Question 1 was asked only in online surveys; Questions 2-11 were asked through online surveys and interviews.

1 - Program and Service Familiarity: With which of the UTRCA's programs and services are you familiar? Please check all that apply.

2 - Strengths: What is the UTRCA doing well?

3 - Weaknesses: Where can the UTRCA improve?

4 - Needs: What are the most pressing needs in the Upper Thames River Watershed that the Conservation Authority could respond to?

5 - Sector Trends: What trends in the environmental sector should the UTRCA keep an eye on?

6 - Opportunities: What external opportunities could the UTRCA leverage in the next few years? E.g., changing attitudes towards environmental protection, opportunities in the local community, technology, etc.

7 - Challenges: What external challenges might the UTRCA face in the next few years? E.g., lack of awareness of Authority environmental programs and services, insufficient funding, technology, etc.

8 - Priorities: What are the top 3 priorities the UTRCA should focus on in the next five years? Why?

9 - Partners 1: How would you describe the UTRCA as a partner?

10 - Partners 2: How can the UTRCA best partner with you? What, if anything, could your organizations do together?

11 - What else: What additional comments or feedback do you have for the UTRCA?

Sample Size by Interest-Holder Groups (organized by number of respondents, in descending order)

Interest-Holder Group Representatives	Number of Respondents
Partner Groups (e.g., government agencies/ ministries, agricultural organizations, academia, community groups, clubs, etc.)	24 (44 contacted)
Municipal Partners	21 (35 contacted)
Board Members (current and former)	19 (28 contacted)
Members of the Public (link shared on UTRCA website/ social media)	16 (random responses)
Other Conservation Authorities	7 (9 contacted)
Non-governmental Organizations	6 (12 contacted)
School Boards	1-3* (6 contacted)
Land Development Groups and Property Lessees	1-3* (6 contacted)
Total Number of Respondents	95-99

*Range provided to maintain respondent anonymity.

1. Program and Service Familiarity: With which of the UTRCA’s programs and services are you familiar? Please check all that apply. (Online Surveys only)

	Partner Groups	Municipal Partners	Board Members	Members of the Public	Other Conservation Authorities	Non-governmental Organizations	School Boards	Land Development Groups / Property Lessees
Flood forecasting, warning, and protection	65%	100%	82%	63%	86%	60%	100%	n/a
Planning, permits, and maps for protection from natural hazards	60%	100%	88%	63%	86%	80%	0%	n/a
Environmental education and community involvement	55%	92%	94%	56%	86%	100%	100%	n/a
Watershed health, science, and monitoring	65%	83%	88%	56%	71%	60%	100%	n/a
Landowner grants and stewardship programs	45%	58%	76%	50%	71%	60%	100%	n/a
Parks, recreation, and natural areas	75%	92%	94%	69%	86%	80%	100%	n/a
Drinking water source protection	30%	75%	94%	50%	71%	60%	0%	n/a
None of the above	0%	0%	6%	13%	29%	0%	0%	n/a
Other (responses specified below)	10%	0%	0%	13%	0%	20%	0%	n/a

- **Other Responses: Partner Groups**
 - Community engagement through “friends of” groups
 - Camping grounds, boat launches
- **Other Responses: Members of the Public**
 - Species at risk (e.g., turtle rescue)
 - Mountain biking
- **Other Responses: Non-governmental Organizations**
 - Fanshawe and Wildwood CAs

2. What is the UTRCA doing well?

Interest-Holder Groups: Common Themes

- **Core Mandate Functions:** Effective delivery of core services, especially **flood forecasting, warning, and protection**, was a frequently cited strength by Board Members, Municipal partners, Other CAs, and Partner Groups. Related strengths include planning and permits, and watershed health monitoring.
- **Environmental Education and Community Engagement:** This was a standout strength, praised by Board Members, Members of the Public, Municipal partners, NGOs, Partner Groups, and most emphatically by School Boards. UTRCA's ability to connect with various community segments, including students and landowners, was frequently highlighted.
- **Partnership and Collaboration:** Municipal partners, NGOs, Other CAs, and Partner Groups all recognized the UTRCA's strength in working collaboratively with various entities, including municipalities, community groups, agricultural communities, and other organizations to achieve shared environmental goals.
- **Parks, Recreation, and Natural Area Management:** The provision and maintenance of conservation areas, trails, and recreational opportunities were valued by Board Members, Members of the Public, and Partner Groups.
- **Dedicated and Knowledgeable Staff:** While not always explicit, the positive comments about program delivery, technical expertise (especially from Municipal partners), and community facilitation (Partner Groups) imply a high regard for UTRCA staff.

Interest-Holder Groups: Varying Perspectives

- **Focus of Strengths:** While all groups acknowledged core flood control and education, some groups emphasized aspects. For example, Municipal partners highly valued the technical expertise and responsiveness of specific UTRCA teams (e.g., flood forecasting, ecology) and their role as "scientists for the environment." Partner Groups and School Boards placed a strong emphasis on the direct community and educational engagement they experienced. Board Members often took a broader view, recognizing strategic financial management and mandate adherence.
- **Specific Program Highlights:** Different programs resonated more strongly with certain groups. For instance, the "Tree Power" initiative and landowner grants were specifically mentioned by Members of the Public, while "Friends groups" facilitation was lauded by Partner Groups.

- **Perception of Efficiency and Focus:** Municipal partners commended UTRCA for focusing on core services and improving efficiencies, while Board Members noted the organization's ability to manage despite provincial changes.

Conclusions - Strengths

The UTRCA is widely perceived as excelling in its core functions of flood management and environmental protection, with acclaim for its extensive environmental education and community engagement programs. Its ability to foster partnerships across diverse sectors, from municipalities to agricultural groups and schools, is a significant asset. The dedication and expertise of its staff are implicitly recognized through the praise for various programs and services.

While there is broad agreement on these overarching strengths, different interest-holder groups naturally highlight the aspects of UTRCA's work most relevant to their interactions and priorities, such as technical support for municipalities, direct educational impact for schools, or recreational opportunities for public and partner groups.

3. Weaknesses: Where can the UTRCA improve?

Interest-Holder Groups: Common Themes

- **Communication and Transparency:** Many groups, including Board Members, Land Development Groups, Municipal partners, NGOs, and Partner Groups, highlighted a need for more effective, transparent, and proactive communication with various interest-holders (municipalities, the public, partners). This includes better articulation of UTRCA's value, services, and decision-making processes.
- **Timeliness and Efficiency of Regulatory Processes:** A significant concern, particularly for Land Development Groups, Municipal partners, and some Board Members, revolved around the timelines, responsiveness, and perceived rigidity of planning, permitting, and approval processes. Some comments indicated dissatisfaction with UTRCA's delaying the start of the clock until approval work was all but complete.
- **Community and Interest-holder Engagement:** While UTRCA's education programs are a strength, there were calls from Members of the Public, NGOs, Partner Groups, and School Boards for even deeper and broader engagement, including more volunteer opportunities, public input mechanisms, and collaboration with diverse community groups.
- **Focus and Scope of Services:** Some groups (Land Development Groups, Municipal partners, Partner Groups) questioned the breadth of UTRCA's activities, suggesting a need to focus more on core mandates, especially considering funding constraints.
- **Enforcement:** Both Members of the Public and Partner Groups raised the issue of enforcement, desiring more visible or robust action on issues like bylaw infractions or environmental damage.

Interest-Holder Groups: Varying Perspectives

- **Nature of Concerns with Regulatory Role:** While multiple groups mentioned regulatory processes, the specific concerns varied. Land Development Groups and some Municipal partners focused heavily on delays and impacts on development. Board Members acknowledged perceptions and the need for better communication around this. Partner Groups had some members calling for stricter enforcement, while others were concerned about the impact on landowners.
- **Suggestions for Communication Targets:** Board Members emphasized communication with *municipal councils/funders*. Members of the Public wanted more accessible information and direct engagement opportunities. Municipal partners desired more direct and collaborative communication with their staff and

councils. Partner Groups sought better communication regarding ongoing projects and more responsive initial contact.

- **Views on Land Management and Scope:** Land Development Groups suggested UTRCA limit conservation to owned lands. Board Members proposed selling surplus lands. Partner Groups had varied views, some wanting more land protection, others a focus on core mandate.
- **Infrastructure Focus:** Partner Groups were vocal about the condition of park infrastructure. Board Members also mentioned infrastructure upgrades.

Conclusions - Weaknesses

While UTRCA has many recognized strengths, key areas for improvement center on enhancing communication and transparency with all interest-holders, particularly regarding its value proposition to municipalities and the rationale behind regulatory decisions. Streamlining regulatory and approval processes to improve timeliness and perceived flexibility is a critical need, especially for those involved in development. Broadening and deepening community engagement, beyond current educational successes, is also desired. Furthermore, there are calls from several quarters to critically evaluate the scope of services in relation to core mandate and available funding, alongside a need for more consistent and visible enforcement of environmental regulations.

Addressing these areas could help improve relationships, manage external perceptions, and ensure resources are optimally deployed.

4. What are the most pressing needs in the Upper Thames River watershed that the Conservation Authority could respond to?

Interest-Holder Groups: Common Themes

- **Flood Management and Climate Change Adaptation:** This was arguably the most pervasive theme. Groups consistently highlighted the need for UTRCA to address increased flooding risks due to climate change through updated mapping, infrastructure maintenance, and adaptation strategies.
- **Water Quality Improvement:** Concerns about pollution, nutrient loading (especially phosphorus), runoff from various sources (agricultural, urban), and overall river health were widespread.
- **Protection and Restoration of Natural Areas/Habitat:** Many groups emphasized the need to protect existing woodlands, wetlands, and natural habitats from development pressures and to actively engage in restoration efforts, including tree planting.
- **Management of Development Pressures:** The tension between development (especially housing) and environmental protection was a common thread, with calls for UTRCA to navigate this effectively, often through better collaboration and clearer processes.
- **Invasive Species Management:** This was identified as a significant and growing concern by multiple groups.
- **Public and Interest-holder Education and Engagement:** A continuous need for education and outreach to various audiences (public, municipalities, landowners, youth) on watershed issues, climate impacts, and conservation practices.

Interest-Holder Groups: Varying Perspectives

- **Emphasis on Development Facilitation vs. Strict Protection:** Land Development Groups and some Municipal partners stressed the need for UTRCA to facilitate development and housing, seeking flexibility and efficiency. Conversely, many Members of the Public, NGOs, and some Partner Groups emphasized stricter protection of natural areas and more robust enforcement.
- **Focus of Water Quality Concerns:** While water quality was a general concern, specific focuses varied. Municipal partners and Partner Groups often highlighted agricultural runoff and nutrient loading. Members of the Public mentioned general river cleanup and pollution prevention.

- **Solutions to Flood Management:** While flood management was a common need, proposed responses varied from technical solutions like mapping and infrastructure (Board Members, Municipal partners) to nature-based solutions and landowner engagement (NGOs, Partner Groups).
- **Role in Data Sharing:** Municipal partners and Land Development Groups specifically called for more transparent sharing of floodplain mapping and data, a need less explicitly stated by other groups.

Conclusions - Needs

The most pressing needs for the UTRCA to address in the Upper Thames River Watershed revolve around proactively managing the escalating impacts of climate change, particularly increased flooding and its associated risks. This includes robust flood forecasting, updated and transparently shared floodplain mapping, and investment in both natural and built infrastructure for mitigation. Closely linked is the urgent need to improve and protect water quality throughout the watershed, tackling issues like nutrient loading and pollution from various sources.

Balancing the intense pressures of development, especially for housing, with the critical need to conserve and restore natural areas, wetlands, and forest cover is a central challenge. Addressing the spread of invasive species and continuing to educate and engage all sectors of the community—from municipalities and landowners to the public and youth—are also vital for fostering a resilient watershed. Effectively navigating these complex and often interconnected needs will require strategic prioritization, strong partnerships, and clear communication.

5. Sector Trends: What trends in the environmental sector should the UTRCA keep an eye on?

Interest-Holder Groups: Common Themes

- **Climate Change and Extreme Weather:** Virtually every group highlighted the increasing impacts of climate change, including more frequent and intense weather events (floods, droughts, storms), and the associated risks.
- **Development Pressures and Land Use Change:** The ongoing and often intensifying pressure from urban expansion, housing development, and changes in agricultural practices on natural landscapes, wetlands, and farmland was a major theme.
- **Invasive Species:** The spread and impact of invasive species were recognized as a growing challenge by many groups.
- **Water Quality Concerns:** Trends related to nutrient loading, pollution, and the overall health of water bodies remain a significant focus.
- **Shifting Political and Regulatory Landscape:** Changes in government priorities, legislation (e.g., pertaining to CAs, development approvals), and funding for environmental initiatives were frequently mentioned as critical external factors.
- **Public Awareness and Engagement:** Trends in public attitudes towards the environment—both positive (increased interest in nature, local food, native plants) and negative (skepticism, misinformation)—and the need to engage diverse communities.

Interest-Holder Groups: Varying Perspectives

- **Focus of Climate Change Impacts:** While climate change was universally noted, the specific impacts emphasized varied. Board Members and Other CAs often discussed policy implications and resilience. Municipal partners focused on infrastructure and planning. Members of the Public and Partner Groups often related it to direct observations like flooding or debris.
- **Technological Opportunities vs. Concerns:** Some groups (Board Members, NGOs, Partner Groups) saw technology (GIS, drones, AI) as an opportunity for better monitoring and management. Others did not highlight technology as prominently.
- **Perception of Agricultural Trends:** Partner Groups and Other CAs noted the intensification of farming and associated environmental pressures (nutrient loss, soil erosion). Municipal partners also mentioned agricultural runoff.
- **Optimism vs. Pessimism on Public Attitudes:** Some noted growing public concern for the environment as an opportunity (Board Members, Partner Groups), while others

highlighted skepticism and misinformation as challenges (Board Members, Municipal partners).

Conclusions – Sector Trends

The UTRCA must remain vigilant regarding several dominant environmental sector trends. The overarching and accelerating impacts of climate change, leading to more extreme weather and increased risks such as flooding, demand constant attention and adaptive management. Concurrent with this is the persistent and often intensifying pressure from urban development and evolving agricultural practices on the watershed's natural systems and resources. The proliferation of invasive species continues to pose a significant ecological threat.

Furthermore, UTRCA operates within a dynamic political and regulatory environment, with shifting government priorities and funding models that directly influence its capacity and mandate. Trends in public awareness, which can range from heightened environmental concern to skepticism, also shape the context for UTRCA's work. Staying attuned to advancements in technology for monitoring and management will be crucial in addressing these complex and interconnected trends effectively.

6 – Opportunities: What external opportunities could the UTRCA leverage in the next few years? e.g., changing attitudes towards environmental protection, opportunities in the local community, technology, etc.

Interest-Holder Groups: Common Themes

- **Growing Public Environmental Awareness and Concern:** Many groups see an opportunity to harness increasing public interest in environmental protection, climate action, local nature, and sustainable practices to build support, engage volunteers, and implement programs.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** A strong recurring theme was the opportunity to build and strengthen partnerships with a wide array of interest-holders: municipalities, community groups, schools and academic institutions, Indigenous communities, NGOs, businesses, and agricultural groups.
- **Technological Advancements:** Leveraging new technologies (AI, GIS, remote sensing, apps, citizen science platforms) for better monitoring, management, operational efficiency, and public engagement.
- **Funding Opportunities:** Pursuing new and existing funding streams, particularly those related to climate change adaptation, nature-based solutions, and green infrastructure from federal, provincial, and potentially private sources.
- **Education and Outreach Expansion:** Building on existing educational strengths to reach wider and more diverse audiences, including youth, newcomers, and specific interest groups, often through innovative methods like virtual learning or hands-on stewardship.

Interest-Holder Groups: Varying Perspectives

- **Focus of Partnerships:** While partnerships were broadly advocated, the specific partners emphasized varied. Board Members and Municipal partners often highlighted municipal and governmental collaborations. NGOs and Partner Groups stressed like-minded environmental organizations and community groups. School Boards focused on educational institutions.
- **Role of Technology:** Some groups (Board Members, Partner Groups) were more explicit about specific technological applications (AI, apps), while others mentioned technology more generally as a tool for engagement or monitoring.

- **Approach to Community Engagement:** Suggestions ranged from grassroots neighbourhood-level education (Board Members) to broader citizen science initiatives (Partner Groups, Other CAs) and specific recreational program development (Members of the Public, Partner Groups).
- **Leveraging Government Relations:** Board Members and Partner Groups specifically mentioned the opportunity to improve communication and collaboration with provincial government to align efforts and secure support.

Conclusions - Opportunities

The UTRCA has significant external opportunities to leverage in the coming years, primarily by tapping into a growing public consciousness regarding environmental protection and climate change. This evolving mindset creates fertile ground for expanding community engagement, volunteerism, and citizen science initiatives. A key strategy will be to forge and deepen partnerships across a diverse spectrum of interest-holders—including municipalities, Indigenous communities, educational institutions, agricultural groups, businesses, and other environmental organizations—to pool resources, share expertise, and amplify impact. Technological advancements offer promising avenues for enhancing monitoring, operational efficiency, and public outreach. Furthermore, aligning UTRCA's projects with emerging governmental and philanthropic funding priorities, especially those focused on climate adaptation, nature-based solutions, and green infrastructure, presents a vital opportunity to secure resources and advance its mission. Successfully capitalizing on these opportunities will depend on proactive outreach, innovative programming, and a continued commitment to collaborative action.

7 – Challenges: What external challenges might the UTRCA face in the next few years? e.g., lack of awareness of Authority environmental programs and services, insufficient funding, technology, etc.

Interest-Holder Groups: Common Themes

- **Insufficient Funding and Financial Uncertainty:** This was the most pervasive challenge, mentioned by nearly every group. Concerns included cuts from provincial/federal sources, municipal budget pressures affecting levies, and the general difficulty of securing adequate, stable funding for programs and infrastructure.
- **Challenging Provincial Government Relationship and Legislative Changes:** Many groups highlighted the difficulties posed by the current provincial government's approach to environmental protection, changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, funding freezes/cuts, and a perceived lack of support or consultation.
- **Development Pressures vs. Environmental Protection:** The increasing demand for land for housing and other development, often conflicting with conservation goals and regulations, was a major concern.
- **Climate Change Impacts:** The escalating effects of climate change (extreme weather, flooding) were seen as a significant operational and financial challenge.
- **Lack of Public Awareness and Understanding:** Many groups noted that a lack of awareness or understanding among the public and some interest-holders about UTRCA's role, value, and programs could undermine support and funding.
- **Political Polarization and Skepticism:** Some groups pointed to broader societal trends like political polarization and skepticism towards science or environmental regulations as potential hurdles.

Interest-Holder Groups: Varying Perspectives

- **Source of Funding Concerns:** While funding was a universal concern, the emphasis varied. Some focused on provincial cuts (Board Members, NGOs), others on municipal levy pressures (Municipal partners), and some on the general economic climate (Partner Groups).
- **Nature of Government Challenges:** Some groups were very direct in their criticism of the current provincial government's actions (Board Members, NGOs, Partner Groups), while others spoke more generally about legislative changes or political priorities (Municipal partners).

- **Focus of Development Pressures: Board Members and Municipal partners** often discussed the direct conflict with urban growth and housing targets. **Members of the Public and Partner Groups** worried about encroachment on natural areas.
- **Perception of UTRCA's Role: Land Development Groups** uniquely framed a challenge as UTRCA needing to be accountable for service issues, implying an internal aspect to an external perception challenge.

Conclusions - Challenges

The UTRCA is likely to face significant external challenges in the coming years. Chief among these is the persistent issue of insufficient and uncertain funding from various governmental levels, exacerbated by a challenging relationship with the current provincial government, whose legislative changes and policy direction are perceived by many as undermining environmental protection and the capacity of Conservation Authorities. Compounding this are the escalating impacts of climate change, which will place increasing demands on UTRCA's resources for flood management and adaptation, and the relentless pressure from urban development that often conflicts with conservation objectives. A lack of broad public awareness or understanding of UTRCA's critical role and the value it provides can further hinder efforts to garner necessary support and resources.

Navigating this complex landscape will require robust advocacy, strategic financial planning, and continued efforts to demonstrate unwavering value to all interest-holders.

8 – Priorities: What are the top 3 priorities the UTRCA should focus on in the next five years? Why?

Interest-Holder Groups: Common Themes

- **Flood Management and Climate Change Resilience:** This was a dominant priority, encompassing updating flood mapping, investing in flood control infrastructure (both natural and built), and developing strategies to adapt to more frequent and intense weather events. The "why" is clear: protecting life, property, and ensuring community safety in the face of escalating climate risks.
- **Water Quality Protection and Improvement:** Addressing issues of pollution, nutrient loading, and overall watershed health was a high priority for many. This is crucial for ecological health, safe drinking water sources, and recreational use.
- **Community Engagement, Education, and Partnerships:** Continuously educating the public, engaging diverse community groups (including youth and newcomers), and strengthening partnerships with municipalities, landowners, and other organizations. This builds support, leverages resources, and fosters a shared stewardship ethic.
- **Balancing Development with Environmental Protection:** Navigating the pressures of urban growth and housing demands by working collaboratively with municipalities and developers to ensure responsible development while safeguarding critical environmental features and functions. This requires efficient and transparent regulatory processes.
- **Financial Sustainability and Operational Effectiveness:** Securing stable and diverse funding, modernizing operations (including technology), and ensuring efficient use of resources to deliver on core mandates. This is fundamental to long-term viability and impact.

Interest-Holder Groups: Varying Perspectives

- **Emphasis on Regulatory Role vs. Broader Conservation:** Land Development Groups and some Municipal partners heavily emphasized improving the efficiency and responsiveness of the regulatory/permitting functions, particularly concerning development. Other groups, like NGOs and many Members of the Public/Partner Groups, often prioritized broader conservation efforts, habitat restoration, and public land stewardship.
- **Approach to Financial Sustainability:** While financial sustainability was a common theme, suggestions varied. Board Members proposed diversified revenue and

modernization. Some Partner Groups advocated for significant cost-cutting and focusing only on essential core services, even suggesting UTRCA was an "empire."

- **Definition of "Core Services":** While many advocated for focusing on "core services," the interpretation of what constitutes "core" sometimes differed, with some focusing narrowly on flood control and others including broader watershed health and education.
- **Urgency of Specific Issues:** While themes like water quality were common, the specific drivers varied – some focused on agricultural runoff, others on urban pollution, and some on ecological health.

Conclusions – Priorities and Executive Summary

This interest-holder consultation suggests the UTRCA's top priorities for the next five years include addressing with proactivity and purpose the escalating risks of climate change, particularly through robust flood management strategies, updated hazard mapping, and investments in both natural and engineered resilience measures. Concurrently, a dedicated focus on protecting and improving water quality across the watershed is paramount. Enhancing community engagement, public education, and collaborative partnerships with municipalities, landowners, and other interest-holders will be crucial for fostering shared responsibility and leveraging collective action. Critically, UTRCA must continue to refine its regulatory processes to be both effective in protecting the environment and efficient in supporting responsible development, while ensuring long-term financial sustainability and operational excellence.

These priorities are vital for safeguarding the watershed's ecological health, protecting communities from natural hazards, and maintaining public trust and support.

9 – Partners 1: How would you describe the UTRCA as a partner?

Interest-Holder Groups: Common Themes

- **Positive Perceptions from Many:** A significant number of respondents across various groups (Board Members, Members of the Public, many Municipal partners, NGOs, Other CAs, some Partner Groups, and School Boards) described UTRCA in positive terms such as "excellent," "good," "collaborative," "supportive," and "knowledgeable."
- **Value in Expertise and Staff:** The expertise of staff and their willingness to share knowledge and support were frequently cited as positive partnership attributes.
- **Success in Specific Areas:** Partnership success was often linked to specific program areas, such as education (School Boards, some Partner Groups), stewardship projects (NGOs, some Municipal partners), or inter-agency collaboration (Other CAs).

Interest-Holder Groups: Varying Perspectives

- **The "Two Faces" of UTRCA:** A prominent varying perspective, articulated by a Board Member and echoed by several Municipal partners, is the difference in perception of UTRCA as a partner depending on the context. In its community engagement, education, and stewardship roles, UTRCA is often seen as an excellent partner. However, in its regulatory and permitting role, particularly concerning development, it is frequently described by developers, some municipalities, and even some Land Development Groups as "slow," "difficult," "frustrating," or "unresponsive."
- **Consistency of Experience:** While some groups like School Boards had uniformly positive experiences, others like Partner Groups and Municipal partners reported a wider spectrum, from excellent to problematic, often depending on the specific interaction or department involved.
- **Responsiveness:** Land Development Groups and some Partner Groups specifically highlighted "slow response times" or lack of responsiveness as a negative partnership trait, a concern less emphasized by groups who primarily interact with UTRCA's educational or stewardship arms.

Conclusions – Partners 1

The UTRCA is often perceived as a valuable and effective partner, particularly in its roles related to environmental education, community stewardship, and inter-agency collaboration where its knowledgeable and dedicated staff are frequently commended. School Boards, NGOs, and Other Conservation Authorities generally hold highly positive views. However, a significant dichotomy exists when UTRCA acts in its regulatory capacity, especially

concerning development approvals and permits, it is frequently described by Land Development Groups, some Municipal partners, and developers as slow, unresponsive, and difficult to work with. This suggests that while UTRCA has strong foundational elements for partnership, its effectiveness as a partner is inconsistent across its various functions and interest-holder interactions.

Improving responsiveness, communication, and perceived flexibility in its regulatory arm appears crucial for fostering a more uniformly positive partnership reputation across all interest-holder groups.

10 – Partners 2: How can the UTRCA best partner with you? What, if anything, could your organizations do together?

Interest-Holder Groups: Common Themes

- **Enhanced Communication and Dialogue:** A universal desire for more open, regular, timely, and two-way communication. This includes listening to partners and being more responsive.
- **Collaboration on Projects and Initiatives:** Many groups expressed willingness and desire to collaborate on specific projects, ranging from habitat restoration and educational programs to data collection and trail maintenance.
- **Streamlined and More Flexible Processes:** Particularly from those interacting with UTRCA's regulatory side, there's a call for more efficient, flexible, and understandable permitting and approval processes.
- **Mutual Support and Resource Sharing:** Opportunities exist for sharing expertise, data, equipment, and volunteer resources to achieve common goals.
- **Education and Outreach:** Partnering on educational initiatives to raise awareness about watershed health, conservation practices, and the role of the UTRCA.

Interest-Holder Groups: Varying Perspectives

- **Nature of Collaboration:** For some (e.g., School Boards, NGOs), partnership often means continuing and expanding successful program collaborations. For others (e.g., Municipal partners, Land Development Groups), it involves more fundamental shifts in communication style, process efficiency, and a willingness to consult or codesign solutions, especially around development.
- **Focus of Improvement:** Groups interacting with the regulatory arm (Municipal partners, Land Development Groups, some Partner Groups) emphasized process improvements and responsiveness. Groups focused on stewardship or education (NGOs, School Boards) highlighted program expansion and joint activities.
- **Power Dynamics:** Some suggestions implied a need for UTRCA to be more of an equal partner, actively seeking input and sharing decision-making, rather than a top-down authority. Another CAs suggested UTRCA could sometimes support other leaders rather than always leading.

Conclusions – Partners 2

UTRCA can best partner with various organizations and individuals by fostering a culture of open, timely, and collaborative communication. This involves not only sharing information but

actively listening to and engaging with partners to understand their needs and perspectives. There is a strong appetite for joint projects across a range of areas, from habitat restoration and educational programming to data sharing and community stewardship initiatives. For interest-holders interacting with UTRCA's regulatory functions, particularly municipalities and developers, a more streamlined, flexible, and responsive permitting process is key to better partnership. Leveraging the expertise and resources of community groups, volunteers, and other organizations through genuine collaboration can significantly amplify UTRCA's impact. Ultimately, successful partnerships will be built on mutual respect, shared goals, and a willingness from UTRCA to adapt its approach to meet the diverse needs of its many interest-holders.

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Joe Gordon, Regulations Coordinator
Date: August 8, 2025
File Number: BoD-08-25-58
Agenda #: 8.3
Subject: Administration and Enforcement – Section 28 Status Report

Recommendation

THAT the Board of Directors receive the Section 28 Status Report for information.

Background

The attached tables are provided to the Board as a summary of staff activity related to Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act* and Ontario Regulation 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits. Table 2 covers staff activities and information for the months of June and July 2025.

Summary of 2025 Permit Activity To-Date (Jan - July):

- **147 permit numbers** have been assigned with **109 of those permits issued**.
- **13** permits have been issued in 2025 where the application was submitted in 2024.
- **Seven (7)** Hydro One Standard Compliance Permits have been issued.
- **16** Permit Extensions or Amendments have been issued.
- **191** Site Clearances for regulated properties where proposed development was reviewed and determined not to require a Section 28 Permit.

TOTAL Permits In-Progress:

There are currently **33 total permits in progress** where additional information is still required prior to processing the permit application. There are six (6) permits-in-progress from 2024 and one (1) from 2023. Further information on outstanding permit applications is provided in Table 2. 30% of those permits-in-progress are within the City of London. Another four (4) applications in addition to the twenty-four (24) permit numbers previously reported in annual reports have been canceled due to inactivity where the application was subsequently withdrawn or where no application form and/or applicable fee have been received.

The following table provides information on ALL permit in-progress in a tally format

Table 1: Permit In-Progress Tracker

YEAR	PERMIT #'S ASSIGNED	MORE INFORMATION REQUIRED	PERMIT ISSUED	HEARING DECISION	INACTIVE* (CLOSED)
2025	143	26	109	0	0
Permits in Progress (Prior Year Submission):					Prior Years
2024	219	6	186	4	23
2023	235	0	230		5

Table 2: Outstanding 2024 Permit Applications:

Permit #	Municipality	Application Received	Staff	Status
114-24	London	5/13/2024	Schnaithmann	Granted - Hearing decision (conditions yet to be satisfied)
166-24	London	9/17/2024	Funk	Paused - 3rd Party Legal (Incomplete Application)
176-24	Ingersoll	9/25/2024	Gordon	Paused - Planning Act appeal (Incomplete Application)
180-24	London	10/10/2024	Funk	Active - Waiting for Technical Study (Incomplete Application).
195-24	SW Oxford	11/5/2024	Gordon	Active - (Incomplete Application)
214-24	London	n/a	Schnaithmann	Active - (pre-submission consultation - technical study review)

The **attached Table 3** provides further details of those permits issued in June and July 2025 and demonstrates compliance with processing timelines required by O. Reg. 41/24 unless otherwise stated.

Recommended by:

Jenna Allain, Manager, Environmental Planning and Regulations

Prepared by:

Joe Gordon, Regulations Coordinator

Jessica Schnaithmann, Land Use Regulations Officer

Mike Funk, Land Use Regulations Officer

Cari Ramsey, Land Use Regulations Officer

Dave Griffin, Land Use Regulations Officer

Richard Brewer, Land Use Regulations Assistant

Carly Sing-Judge, Land Use Regulations Assistant

Section 28 Status Report – Summary of Applications for 2025
Ontario Regulation 41/24

Table 3

Report Date: June and July 2025

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

Permit #	Municipality	Location	Category	Application Type	Project Description	Application Received	Response Notice	Notification of Complete Application	Permit Issued On	Comply with Timelines	Staff
P23-25	London	Adelaide WWTP, 1059 Adelaide Street North	Municipal Project	Minor	Proposed Site Level Flood Protection Works	19-Dec-2024	20-Dec-2024	24-Jun-2025	26-Jun-2025	YES	Schnaithmann
P47-25	London	3736 Colonel Talbot Road (3625 Colonel Talbot Road)	Complex	Major	30 Unit Townhouse Development	7-Oct-2024	23-Oct-2024	19-Jun-2025	19-Jun-2025	YES	Schnaithmann
P78-25	Middlesex Centre	Middlesex Centre	Municipal Drain	Minor	Pattyn Drainage Works	21-Apr-2025	5-May-2025	21-May-2025	25-Jun-2025	NO	Brewer
P82-25	London	6955 Loyalist Place - Talbot Village E2/E3 SWMF	Municipal Project	Routine	Stormwater Management Facility Cleanout	11-Apr-2025	12-May-2025	6-Jun-2025	19-Jun-2025	YES	Sing-Judge
P83-25	London	2070 Wallingford Avenue - Sunningdale 6B SWMF	Municipal Project	Routine	Stormwater Management Facility Cleanout	11-Apr-2025	12-May-2025	6-Jun-2025	19-Jun-2025	YES	Sing-Judge
P84-25	London	940 Sunningdale Road E - Stoney Creek 1N SWMF	Municipal Project	Routine	Stormwater Management Facility Cleanout	11-Apr-2025	12-May-2025	6-Jun-2025	19-Jun-2025	YES	Sing-Judge

Permit #	Municipality	Location	Category	Application Type	Project Description	Application Received	Response Notice	Notification of Complete Application	Permit Issued On	Comply with Timelines	Staff
P88-25	London	Ivey Park and Mitchell Baran Park (Forks of the Thames)	Municipal Project	Minor	Replacement of the Existing Sanitary Sewer Siphon Crossing the Thames River with a New Siphon to be Installed using Trenchless Technologies	24-Feb-2025	25-Feb-2025	30-May-2025	5-Jun-2025	YES	Schnaithmann
P90-25	Stratford	6 - 300 William Street	Development	Minor	Swimming Pool and Retaining Wall	13-May-2025	13-May-2025	9-Jun-2025	12-Jun-2025	YES	Gordon
P100-25	SW Oxford	McBeth Rd, Mount Elgin, Daniel Rd, Airport Rd	Development	Major	Proposed installation of fiber services for the purpose of FTTH	8-May-2025	27-May-2025	29-May-2025	5-Jun-2025	YES	Brewer
P102-25	Woodstock	745364 Oxford County Road #17	Development	Major	Subdivision Phase 2 Site Alteration & Servicing	13-May-2025	29-May-2025	30-May-2025	5-Jun-2025	YES	Griffin
P103-25	Zorra	415649 41st Line	Development	Routine	Replacement Septic System	28-May-2025	6-Jun-2025	10-Jun-2025	10-Jun-2025	YES	Griffin
P104-25	Perth South	4519 Line 34	Development	Major	Replacement Barn	28-May-2025	9-Jun-2025	13-Jun-2025	19-Jun-2025	YES	Griffin
P105-25	London	20 Towerline Place	Development	Major	Building Addition	20-May-2025	30-May-2025	4-Jun-2025	9-Jun-2025	YES	Funk
P106-25	Woodstock	403 Tecumseh St (Burgess Park Trail)	Municipal Project	Routine	Erosion Protection and Shoreline Stabilization	13-May-2025	4-Jun-2025	6-Jun-2025	10-Jun-2025	YES	Griffin
P107-25	London	70 Springfield Avenue	Development	Routine	Replacing Elevated Deck	4-Jun-2025	5-Jun-2025	6-Jun-2025	6-Jun-2025	YES	Sing-Judge

Permit #	Municipality	Location	Category	Application Type	Project Description	Application Received	Response Notice	Notification of Complete Application	Permit Issued On	Comply with Timelines	Staff
P108-25	London	188 Rathnally Street (West London potential SPA)	Development	Minor	Addition and Interior Reno	30-May-2025	5-Jun-2025	10-Jun-2025	13-Jun-2025	YES	Sing-Judge
P110-25	London	1210 Adelaide St N	Development	Routine	Asphalt Parking Lot	30-May-2025	11-Jun-2025	16-Jun-2025	16-Jun-2025	YES	Funk
P111-25	Stratford	3807 Road 110 at Perth Line 33	Linear Utility Corridor	Routine	Installing gas service	29-May-2025	13-Jun-2025	16-Jun-2025	16-Jun-2025	YES	Sing-Judge
P115-25	Woodstock	290 Pittock Park Rd	Development	Major	Foundation Reconstruction	17-Jun-2025	18-Jun-2025	20-Jun-2025	20-Jun-2025	YES	Griffin
P116-25	London	30 Kensington Ave	Development	Minor	Interior renovation and addition - SPA area	4-Jun-2025	17-Jun-2025	23-Jun-2025	27-Jun-2025	YES	Sing-Judge
P118-25	London	311 Conway Drive	Development	Routine	Proposed Shed	7-Jun-2025	18-Jun-2025	19-Jun-2025	24-Jun-2025	YES	Sing-Judge
P31-25	London	85 Charles Street	Development	Minor	Parking lot expansion	27-Jan-2025	27-Feb-2025	24-Jun-2025	15-Jul-2025	YES	Funk
P72-25	London	2473 Oxford Street West	Development	Major	Proposed Demolition and Replacement of Existing Single Detached Dwelling	17-Apr-2025	24-Apr-2025	5-May-2025	18-Jul-2025	YES	Schnaithmann
P93-25	London	815 Windermere Road (Stoneybrook Recreation Field)	Municipal Project	Routine	Baseball Diamond Reconfiguration	2-May-2025	15-May-2025	16-Jul-2025	17-Jul-2025	YES	Funk
P113-25	London	271 Windermere Road	Development	Routine	Improvements to Chemistry Parking Lot	13-Jun-25	13-Jun-25	13-Jun-25	4-Jul-25	YES	Funk
P114-25	London	25 Metamora Crescent	Development	Major	Additions to dwelling	16-Jun-25	9-Jul-25	17-Jul-25	18-Jul-25	YES	Funk

Permit #	Municipality	Location	Category	Application Type	Project Description	Application Received	Response Notice	Notification of Complete Application	Permit Issued On	Comply with Timelines	Staff
P117-25	London	246 Greenwood Ave	Development	Minor	Micropile installation - phase 1 of slope restoration and stabilization project	5-Jun-25	18-Jun-25	17-Jul-25	18-Jul-25	YES	Funk
P120-25	London	27 North Pond Court	Development	Routine	Deck Extension	23-Jun-25	26-Jun-25	26-Jun-25	2-Jul-25	YES	Sing-Judge
P121-25	Ingersoll	171 Thames Street	Development	Routine	Replacement Deck	24-Jun-25	26-Jun-25	11-Jul-25	11-Jul-25	YES	Griffin
P122-25	Perth South	3995 Line 9-Wildwood CA	Development	Routine	Wildwood Lake Trail Improvements	30-Jun-25	30-Jun-25	30-Jun-25	3-Jul-25	YES	Brewer
P124-25	SW Oxford	Prouse Rd (Lot 27, Con 6)	Linear Utility Corridor	Minor	UBF SWOX PH24 UTRCA PLOTS 2025 01–Installation of fibre lines for fiber services. Undercrossing a watercourse	23-Jun-25	7-Jul-25	10-Jul-25	11-Jul-25	YES	Brewer
P126-25	London	612 Hale Street (Kiwanis Park North)	Municipal Project	Routine	Sports Courts	21-Feb-25	7-Mar-25	9-Jul-25	11-Jul-25	YES	Funk
P127-25	West Perth	5740 Line 46	Development	Routine	New Shed	10-Jul-25	10-Jul-25	11-Jul-25	11-Jul-25	YES	Ramsey
P129-25	SW Oxford	Oak Street & Beachville Road	Development	Routine	Drain Spot Cleanout selective tree removal	3-Jul-25	14-Jul-25	14-Jul-25	14-Jul-25	YES	Brewer
P131-25	St Marys	516 Emily Street	Development	Minor	Deck and Second Floor Addition	14-Jul-25	14-Jul-25	15-Jul-25	21-Jul-25	YES	Ramsey
P132-25	London	1424 Clarke Road (Safety Village)	Development	Routine	Solar Panel Pergola	23-Jul-25	23-Jul-25	23-Jul-25	24-Jul-25	YES	Sing-Judge

Permit #	Municipality	Location	Category	Application Type	Project Description	Application Received	Response Notice	Notification of Complete Application	Permit Issued On	Comply with Timelines	Staff
P133-25	SW Oxford	Lots 11, Con 4 - Lot 18, Con 5	Municipal Project	Routine	Reynolds Creek Municipal Drain-Brushing & Bottom Cleanout of 5300m w a portion through a wetland	17-Jul-25	17-Jul-25	21-Jul-25	24-Jul-25	YES	Brewer
P134-25	Middlesex Centre	29 Millcreek Lane, Delaware	Development	Routine	New pergola	22-Jul-25	24-Jul-25	24-Jul-25	31-Jul-25	YES	Ramsey
P135-25	Zorra	Part Lot 30, Concession 2 (Harrington Conservation Area)	Restoration/Creation	Routine	New Pedestrian Bridge	29-Jul-25	30-Jul-25	30-Jul-25	30-Jul-25	YES	Griffin
P138-25	Woodstock	37/99 11th Line (Burgess Park - Lions Trail)	Municipal Project	Routine	Shoreline Erosion Repairs	14-Jul-25	25-Jul-25	31-Jul-25	31-Jul-25	YES	Griffin
P139-25	Woodstock	403 Tecumseh St (Standard Tube Burgess Park)	Municipal Project	Routine	Parking Lot Expansion	15-Jul-25	25-Jul-25	31-Jul-25	31-Jul-25	YES	Griffin
P140-25	Middlesex Centre	81 Blackburn Cres.	Development	Routine	Deck and Concrete Patio	23-Jul-25	25-Jul-25	25-Jul-25	28-Jul-25	YES	Ramsey
P143-25	London	1209 Richmond Street	Development	Routine	Parking lot reconfiguration	21-Jul-25	30-Jul-25	30-Jul-25	30-Jul-25	YES	Funk

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Joe Gordon, Regulations Coordinator
Date: August 8, 2025
File Number: BoD-08-25-59
Agenda #: 8.4
Subject: Administrative Review Officers (ARO) Discretionary Policy Decisions – Quarterly Report

Recommendation

THAT the Board of Directors receive the ARO Quarterly Report for information.

Background

At the November 2024 Full Authority meeting the Board of Directors carried a motion to authorize the Administrative Review Officers (ARO), being the General Manager and the Manager, Environmental Planning and Regulations, to exercise discretionary decision-making regarding certain policies within the Environmental Planning Policy Manual (revised 2017), on an interim basis and that this discretionary decision-making be limited to wetland management policies and certain floodplain management policies relating to dry access requirements. Additional authorization for consideration of floodplain freeboard areas was included for ARO discretionary decision-making at the February 2025 Full Authority meeting.

As part of the Board authorizations, staff were directed to report back to the Board on a quarterly basis summarizing the instances and outcomes associated with the ARO use of interim authority. The first quarterly report was presented to the Board in March 2025 which reported a total of 13 development applications that had been endorsed by the ARO's.

The following provides a summary of the ARO discretionary policy decisions that have been considered and endorsed since the first quarterly report.

Wetlands – Removal, Compensation and/or Off-setting

Contrary to existing prohibitive wetland policy #3.2.6(2), a total of **four (4)** Development Applications have been endorsed by the ARO's since the last quarterly report for proposed development within a wetland where demonstration has been provided to staff satisfaction that there will likely be no impact upon the control of natural hazards:

- Two (2) of those applications relate to the removal of small unmapped wetlands (<0.5ha) with proposed onsite compensation/off-setting;
- Two (2) of those applications relate to partial removal or alterations to wetlands with proposed onsite compensation/off-setting.

Access Standard – Dry Access requirement

A total of **one (1)** Planning Application has been supported by the ARO's to date for new development that maintains the provincial "safe" access standard but cannot achieve UTRCA policy #3.2.3.1(4) for "dry" access:

That application relates to a proposed new development that UTRCA staff consider a low-risk use, where all construction of proposed new buildings, structures and laneway are located outside of any hazardous lands. However, access from the municipal road, Blandford Road, to the subject property is inundated by the outer extent of flood water from Trout Creek. "Dry" access standards are achieved for pedestrian ingress/egress to the property, but vehicular access can only achieve the provincial "safe" access standard.

Floodplain Freeboard

There have been no applications considered to date by the ARO's for development within the floodplain freeboard area.

Outcomes

The discretionary ARO decisions to date have provided the necessary support and guidance for staff to work collaboratively with the associated municipality and proactively advance appropriate development applications through the municipal planning process.

These ARO decisions have supported staff's position on proposed development where, through satisfactory technical studies, have demonstrated that the provincial minimum standards have been met and/or impacts of development upon the control of natural hazards are minor or negligible. The discretionary policy decisions provide the necessary certainty to staff that a Section 28 Permit can be issued at the staff level after completion of the planning approval process.

This interim process has eliminated the prior challenges for staff providing regulatory and advisory comments on planning and development applications that are generally supported by staff and the municipality but has been complicated by existing UTRCA prohibitive policies with no flexibility for consideration of support based on the site-specific considerations and technical aspects.

This process has also reduced the necessity of scheduling hearings for the sole purpose of addressing non-compliance with policy where staff are supportive of the development and where the requirements of provincial policy and the Section 28 regulation have ultimately been met.

These examples will be considered when developing policy updates to the new Planning and Regulation Policy Document.

Recommended by:

Tracy Annett, General Manager / Secretary Treasurer (ARO)

Jenna Allain, Manager, Environmental Planning and Regulations (ARO)

Prepared by:

Joe Gordon, Regulations Coordinator

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Erin Dolmage, Hazard Mapping Communications and Marketing Specialist
Jenna Allain, Manager, Environmental Planning and Regulations
Date: August 26, 2025
File Number: BoD-08-25-60
Agenda #: 8.5
Subject: Hazard Mapping Consultation Update

Recommendation

THAT the Board of Directors receive this report for information.

Background

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) maintains mapping that identifies the approximate location of flood and erosion hazards, wetlands, and the area surrounding wetlands, to support the *Conservation Authorities Act* and Ontario Regulation 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits.

The UTRCA is undertaking a comprehensive review and upgrade of its regulated area maps. Updating these maps is an important and ongoing process that enables the conservation authority and its municipal partners to use the most current information to identify hazards, assess risk, and guide land use decisions.

Discussion

Since September 2024, the UTRCA has been in consultation for the Thames River Regulated Area Map Update within the City of London. Significant consultation has occurred between the UTRCA, City of London, London Development Institute and the public. Overall, the consultation process has fostered collaborative conversations between agencies resulting in a better understanding of the hydrology and hydraulics of the Thames River as well as Fanshawe Dam operations. Public consultation has increased awareness of regulated areas within the City however, work is still needed to educate the public about natural hazards and their associated risks.

UTRCA staff have responded to all comments received through the consultation process. Revisions to the Thames River mapping through the City of London based on comments received have been completed, where appropriate. Key adjustments include:

- Removing the 0.3m freeboard from the 250-yr floodline.
- Renaming the “Regulated Valley” layer to “River and Stream Valley”.
- Removing the erosion hazard layer as this information is contained in the renamed “River and Stream Valley” layer.
- Applying provincial allowances to the hazard layers to determine the overall regulation limit layer.

Further explanation is warranted for the removal of the 0.3m freeboard from public mapping. The UTRCA has agreed to include the 0.3m freeboard area in policy only and

not delineate this area on maps due to the lack of specific guidance from the Province on addressing climate change impacts. The UTRCA recognizes that some properties located in the 0.3m freeboard area will be outside policy limits. The inclusion of climate change considerations on UTRCA maps may need to be revisited in the future when further provincial guidance becomes available.

To complete the consultation process for the Thames River within the City of London, a final map will be posted for a 30-day public notification period beginning on September 24, 2025. A consultation report along with the final map will be brought forward to the October 28, 2025, Board of Director's meeting for approval. Once board approval has been received, staff will update the UTRCA geoportal and City of London with the approved mapping. The draft geoportal site will be removed, and the associated Engage Thames River project will be closed.

The next section of the Thames River to go out to consultation will be the South Thames River from Pittock Dam in Woodstock to the easterly City of London limits. Staff are currently performing an internal review of the mapping prior to engagement with member municipalities along this reach.

Consultation will be split into two sections based on subwatershed areas.

- Ingersoll Corridor (Pittock Dam to approximately Putnam Road)
- Dorchester Corridor (approximately Putnam Road to City of London east limits)

Municipal consultation will occur this fall once draft mapping has been finalized by staff. Public consultation for the South Thames River is expected to begin in January 2026.

Prepared by:

Erin Dolmage, Hazard Mapping Communications and Marketing Specialist

Recommended by:

Jenna Allain, Manager, Environmental Planning and Regulations

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Tracy Annett
Date: August 26, 2025
File Number: BoD-08-25-61
Agenda #: 8.6
Subject: Project Status Updates

Recommendation

THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

Background

To assist the Board with previously discussed items the following status updates are provided. This report is updated and included at each meeting to identify project timelines and expected future reports.

Discussion

The table below provides progress and estimated timelines associated with significant UTRCA projects and items identified by the Board of Directors requesting reports. As the Strategic Plan is completed, workplans deliverables will also be incorporated into the tables below.

Report Back Items	Planned report or update	Project lead(s)	Status
City of London 2026 Budget Request	June 2025	Tracy & Christine	In progress – Draft initial response in April with additional updates to be provided through 2026 budget development, regular updates to be provided. July 9 th – staff met with City of London Finance staff to share UTRCA budget process.
Green Leaders Participating Schools	April 2025	Karlee and Brad	Complete – Requested details on Schools participating in Green Leaders Program. Details are provided and included as part of Community Engagement and Events update. Green Leaders event will be held on June 3 rd with several members participating.
Hazard Mapping Consultation	August 2025	Jenna & Erin	In progress - Hazard Mapping Consultation Thames River in the City of London Report was provided at September

Report Back Items	Planned report or update	Project lead(s)	Status
			Meeting and Presentation in October 2024. Status update provided in April, next update expected in August.
Land Options (March 2025, June 2025)	As required	Brent & Tracy	In progress - As requested at the October meeting, report provided March 2025 with a report on options for parcels identified in closed session. Reports to follow as necessary.
Administrative Review / Interim Policies (March 2025)	Quarterly updates Jan-Mar Q1 Apr-June Q2 Jul-Sept Q3 Oct-Dec Q4 Next update at August Meeting	Jenna	In progress - Administrative Review Policy in November 2024 December - Environmental Policy Manual Updates and Interim Response Mechanisms: Discussion Papers 1) Overview and Discussion 2) Wetland Management Policies 3) Access Standards February – Floodplain Freeboard Interim Response (Administrative Review Report in no later than March 31, 2025) First report provided in March with next Quarterly report planned to include April to June at the August meeting
Planning and Regulations Policy Updates (March 2024, September 2024, June 2025)	October 2025	Jenna	In progress - Release of new S28 Regulations on Friday February 16th, effective April 1, 2024. May 2024 Meeting included Technical Checklists and S28 Compliance Procedures Staff will continue to develop policies and procedures, and undertake consultation with municipalities, partners, and development groups, etc.
Children's Safety Village (June 2023, February 2024)	April	Teresa & Brent	Complete – Update provided at the April 2025 meeting. Future updates to be included with Day Use Plans.
Retention Policy	August	Tracy & Michelle	Overdue – updated retention policy to be prepared based on a collaborative CA draft. The CA draft has been legally reviewed. Aligning retention policies with integration of Microsoft 365 (file structure, naming conventions, etc.) Currently migrating from GroupWise to Outlook and Microsoft 365. FOI requests have delayed work on the policy.

Report Back Items	Planned report or update	Project lead(s)	Status
Cyber Security	October	Tracy Christine Chris	Overdue - Report to F&A – Staff to prepare a report on the current state of cyber security for the organization and any recommendations to improve to be presented to the Finance and Audit Committee at the April meeting, in-camera. Directed staff for future updates. Report to the Board to follow. Information Management/Technology efforts have been focused on migration to Microsoft 365 and the tools for enhanced security
Security for BOD access to agendas	October	Chris	In progress - Options to ensure secure access to agenda packages for Board Members
UTRCA Asset Management Plan	November	Brent & Christine	In progress - Groups of Assets e.g., Natural Hazard Infrastructure, Fleet, Facilities etc. Regular progress reports expected. (Note* suggested to add graphics similar to those used by the City of London in their asset management plans to identify overall condition of asset) Asset Management Policy – Approved January 2024, Updated in May 2025 regular updates to be provided as asset classes are undertaken.
Land Tenant Program Update (Last update provided November 2024, June 2025)	As required	Brent	In progress – Ongoing status of land tenant program, in-camera. Report provided. Update provided in October. Verbal in-camera update in November and report in June. Future update as required.
Phosphorus Reduction Program	June	Tatianna	Complete - Staff to provide a future update report on program uptake.

Definitions

Progress	Timeline
Not started	indicate project initiation date
In progress	anticipate completion date
Complete	date completed
Overdue	expected completion date and reasons for the delay
On Hold	other circumstances

Summary

The summary provided is intended to help track items requesting report updates to the Board and project updates. It is noted that items may be shifted to accommodate the number of agenda items, staff workload and board meeting schedules.

Recommended by:

Tracy Annett, General Manager

To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Christine Saracino, Supervisor of Finance and Accounting
Date: August 26, 2025
File Number: BoD-08-25-62
Agenda #: 9.1
Subject: Finance and Audit Committee – June 24 Meeting

Recommendation

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Background

The Finance and Audit Committee met on June 24th to receive an update on the UTRCA investment portfolio. Committee meeting agendas and minutes can be found on the [Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Website](#).

Meeting Decisions

The Committee adjourned to closed session to hear a presentation from the UTRCA investment firm Philips Hagar and North (PH&N) and discuss the UTRCA investment portfolio. Upon rising, the following motion was passed:

Mover: Harj Nijjar

Seconder: Mark Schadenberg

THAT the Finance and Audit Committee receives the closed session report for information.

Carried.

Prepared by:

Michelle Viglianti, Administrative Assistant

Recommended by:

Christine Saracino, Supervisor, Finance and Accounting