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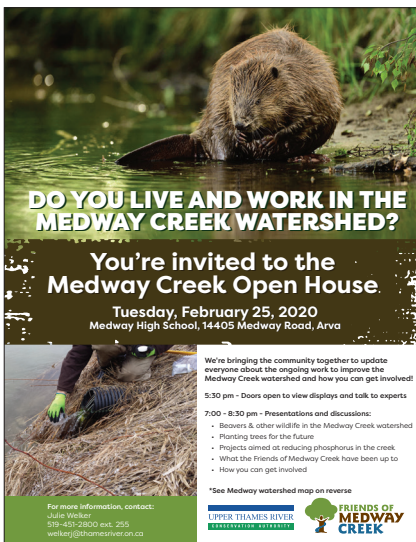
February 2020



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Medway Creek Open House

Do you live or work in the Medway Creek watershed? You're invited to the **Medway Creek Open House** on Tuesday, February 25, at Medway Secondary School (14405 Medway Road, Arva). The doors open at 5:30 pm with displays and time to talk with experts, followed by a series

Rural Landowner Workshop

This year's **Rural Landowner Workshop** will be held at the St. Marys Pyramid Recreation Centre on Tuesday, March 10 from 7-9 pm. This workshop has been very well attended in recent years.

Local experts will present on the following topics:

- Cover Crops, Drainage & More (Rick Kootstra, Kootstra Farms, Clinton),
- So the Climate is Changing; How about our Forests? Creating Climate Ready Tree Seed with Assisted Migration (Kristen Sandvall, Forest Gene Conservation Association),
- Profitability Mapping: Digging into Data (Mike Wilson, CCA Veritas),
- The Need for Trees Then and Now: Tree Planting in the UTRCA Watershed (John Enright and Brenda Gallagher, UTRCA).

There will also be an opportunity to discuss on farm conservation projects with UTRCA staff. The workshop is free, no need to register, and all are welcome. Contact: [John Enright](#), Forester



This White Pine was planted in 1905 in Perth County.

of brief presentations beginning at 7:00 pm.

The **Friends of Medway Creek** and the UTRCA are co-hosting this open house to give the community a window into all the exciting things that have been going on in the Medway Creek watershed to improve water quality and forest conditions. Learn about the interesting wildlife that lives in the Medway watershed; how we're planting trees for the future; projects aimed at reducing phosphorus in the creek; and, most importantly, how you can get involved!

Contact: [Julie Welker](#), Community Partnership Specialist



London homeowners pick out their own Tulip Tree.

Forest City Tree Power – 10 Years Strong

This spring, London Hydro and the UTRCA will celebrate the 10th anniversary of [Tree Power in London](#). The goal of the program is to increase tree cover in the Forest City and reduce energy consumption. This partnership was initiated in 2011 and each year since, London homeowners have had the opportunity to purchase a native hardwood tree.

Spring 2020 will see the 6,000th tree planted through this program. Starting March 17 at 10 am, London homeowners will be able to order a tree on-line by visiting www.treepowerprogram.ca. This year, Sugar Maple, Yellow Birch, Hackberry, Tulip Tree, American Sycamore and Bur Oak are available. The trees are 1.5-1.75 metres tall and come in 3 gallon pots, and will retail for \$20. Demand will be high so homeowners are encouraged to order early.

Contact: [John Enright](#), Forester

UTRCA in London's Top 5 Best Places to Work!

The UTRCA is one of the top five Best Places to Work! [London Inc.'s 2020 Best Places to Work](#) survey asked employees to rate their workplace. Employees were asked to complete an online survey that measures their employer on such values as trust in leadership, personal engagement, collaborative culture and satisfaction of individual needs. Employers were ranked based solely on this employee survey feedback. The UTRCA ranked in the top five in the large business category!

Thinning "The Pines" at Pittcock CA



"The Pines" is a 110 acre parcel within [Pittcock Conservation Area](#) that is leased by the [Woodstock Cycling Club](#). The club encourages members of all ages and skill levels

to ride the trails there and enjoy the outdoors while getting some exercise.

As the name suggests, the area is dominated by a plantation of White Pine and White Spruce, planted in the early 1970s. There is also a small wetland and some hardwood trees scattered throughout. UTRCA [forestry staff manage properties](#) such as The Pines with the goal of encouraging this type of monoculture woodland

to transition into a more diverse and sustainable forest. Generally, plantations are thinned every 10 to 15 years to encourage better tree growth and open up space for other species to take root. The Pines were first thinned in 2005, when every fourth row was removed.

This winter, 45 acres of The Pines were selectively thinned by UTRCA forestry staff and a



logging contractor. In December, forestry staff marked the trees for removal, based on spacing and tree health.



The harvester at work.

The thinning began January 3 and wrapped up at the end of the month. Thinning was done using a cut to length harvester that fells and delimbs the tree and then cuts it into log lengths. The harvester travelled down the corridors created years ago when every fourth row was removed, to cut the trees marked for removal.

A forwarder picked up the logs and took them to a loading area where they were loaded onto a log truck and taken to local mills to be processed into 4x4 and 6x6 timber. Approximately 22 acres of White Pine and 23 acres of White Spruce were thinned.



The logs are loaded and taken to local mills.

The UTRCA worked closely with the Woodstock Cycling Club to plan the thinning project and discuss the impacts on the club's trails and use of the area. The club members see this as an exciting opportunity to improve their trail system.

Contact: [Jay Ebel](#), Forestry Technician

Winterfest Fun!

Stratford Winterfest is three days of spectacular winter programming in January. This year's theme, "Keep Calm and Freeze On," included many activities and events. **Wildwood Conservation Area**

and Community Education staff provided a wood fire surrounded by cedar chairs, shelter under the new UTRCA canopy, and a play area with a variety of natural materials and objects.



Visitors could check out our snowmobile which was on-site to set the track for people to try our fat bikes, in partnership with Totally Spok'd. Staff also talked with participants about Wildwood programs and UTRCA initiatives. The event was a great opportunity to connect with the broader community and share our message.

Contact: [Maranda MacKean](#), Community Education Specialist

Winter Plans for Future Plants

Winter is planning time for **Communities for Nature** programs throughout the Upper Thames River watershed. We are working with several groups who are interested in improving the environment through planting native trees and shrubs, as well as native wildflowers, grasses, and aquatic plants.

Some of our current partners include:

- Lions Clubs as they celebrate 100 years in Canada,
- Hudson Boat Works, builders of high performance, Olympic calibre rowing boats,
- Columbia Sportswear employees looking to get outside and plant trees,
- Local students and teachers who have initiated projects to green their school grounds;
- TD Tree Days, an international program to plant 1 million trees by 2030,
- Stratford Dog Park enthusiasts looking to offset the loss of dozens of ash trees,
- Perth County, which is interested in establishing rain gardens to absorb and filter stormwater, and
- Trees for Woodfield, a London community that has been beautifying their neighbourhood for decades.

We work closely with our member municipalities such as the City of London, the City of Woodstock, the City of Stratford, Zorra Township, the Town of St. Marys, and Thames Centre, as well as Oxford, Middlesex and Perth Counties. Winter is also the time to work with our nursery partners to secure trees, shrubs, wildflower plants and seeds, and aquatics.

Of course, none of these projects would go forward without funding from a wide range of sources. If you're interested in participating in our Communities for Nature projects, with people or financial support or both, we would like to hear from you!

Contact: [Karen Pugh](#), Resources Specialist

The Thames: Celebrating 20 Years as a Canadian Heritage River

This year marks the **20th anniversary of the Thames River's designation as a Canadian Heritage River**. The watershed was designated for its outstanding cultural, recreational and natural values.

The **Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS)** is Canada's national river conservation program. The CHRS recognizes Canada's outstanding rivers and encourages their long-term management to conserve their natural, cultural and recreational values for the benefit and enjoyment of Canadians. Today, there are 40 Canadian Heritage Rivers totaling close to 10,000 km.



The Steering Committee in 2000, unveiling a CHRS plaque at the Forks of the Thames in London.

The idea of pursuing designation for the Thames River watershed came from Dr. Douglas Bocking, retired Dean of Medicine at Western University and an avid paddler. He hoped designation would lead to increased appreciation and stewardship of the river's natural and cultural heritage and recreational opportunities.

In 1996, a Steering Committee began to gather information and prepare the documents required for designation. The committee was led by Dr. Bocking with technical assistance from the Upper Thames River and Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authorities. The effort was supported by many community groups, as well as watershed municipalities and First Nations.

A **background study** compiled detailed information on the river's heritage and values. A **strategy** was also written outlining goals for conserving the watershed's

natural, cultural and recreational features and values for the future.

What has the CHRS designation meant for the watershed? Dr. Bocking's vision of increased awareness and stewardship has taken root. Many projects have arisen, in part, due to this awareness, including:

- The annual **Thames River Cleanup**,
- The **Back to the River** project in London,
- Books such as *The Thames: A Pictorial Journey* (Richard Bain) and ***The Thames River Watershed, A heritage landscape guide*** (Michael Troughton),
- Local art exhibits with the Thames as a theme,
- A London Free Press series on the Thames,
- The **Thames River Clear Water Revival**/Shared Waters Approach initiative,
- Micro-breweries adopting local names (e.g., Forked River Brewing Company, Upper Thames Brewing Company),
- Renewed interest in paddling the river, with initiatives such as **Traverse the Thames**.

During this 20th anniversary year, let's continue to celebrate the Thames River and reflect on our connection to this important southern Canadian river.

Contact: [Cathy Quinlan](#), Terrestrial Biologist

Board of Directors - On the Agenda

The next UTRCA Board of Directors meeting will be the Annual General Meeting on February 20, 2020, at the UTRCA **Watershed Conservation Centre**, located in Fanshawe Conservation Area.

- Delegations - Perth South, St. Marys
- Presentation and Approval of 2020 Draft Budget
- 2020 Capital Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Projects
- 2020 By-Law Updates
- Bill 108 Update
- Top Employer
- Presentation of the Kayla Berger Stewardship Award
- Guest Speaker - Phil McLeod
- Presentation of the Inspiration Award
- Presentation of the Board of Directors Award
- Presentation of Service Awards

Draft agendas, audio recordings, and approved minutes are posted at www.thamesriver.on.ca on the "Board Agendas & Minutes" page.

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