

fyi

November 2019

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The Gift of a Healthy Environment

Looking for that perfect gift for someone special? Consider a donation in their name to www.thamesriverdonations.ca! Your donation can be earmarked to support the UTRCA's Species at Risk program, help green the watershed, sponsor a class trip for an environmental education program, rehabilitate a local stream, or create a rain garden!

SW Ontario Orthoimagery Project

Digital aerial photography, known commonly as orthoimagery, has become a standard product used by UTRCA staff for the past 19 years. Imagery was taken and rectified (shaped to the Earth's surface) in years 2000, 2006, 2010 and 2015. The image quality continues to improve as technology advances, providing a more precise and accurate product to interpret change and take measurements. Updating the imagery on a five year cycle provides UTRCA staff with a current picture to assist them in reviewing planning and regulations requests, measuring land cover change, planning conservation services projects, and answering many other day to day questions.

The 2020 South Western Ontario Orthoimagery Project (SWOOP) will cover approximately 44,000 km² of Southwestern Ontario, including the UTRCA watershed (3,420 km²) (see map below). Project partners include municipalities, conservation authorities, provincial and federal government ministries and agencies, First Nations, and private corporations. Sharing the overall cost between partners allows a large savings to the UTRCA in acquiring the photography. SWOOP is managed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

UTRCA hosted a public meeting recently to initiate the 2020 project, with invitations extended to all past and prospective partners. It is anticipated that aerial photography collection will begin in late March 2020.



For information about becoming a partner and photography specifications see, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/land-information-ontario#section-3>.

Contact: Terry Chapman, GIS Specialist

Cover Crops – A Growing BMP

In our second year of focusing on cover crops in the upper Medway Creek watershed, there has been a surge in uptake among landowners. A total of 960 acres of farmland are being planted to cover crops this fall, providing over-winter cover for soil through the vulnerable winter and spring seasons when we typically see the largest runoff events. Above-ground vegetation and subsurface root growth all help to reduce the impact of rainfall and runoff on soils.



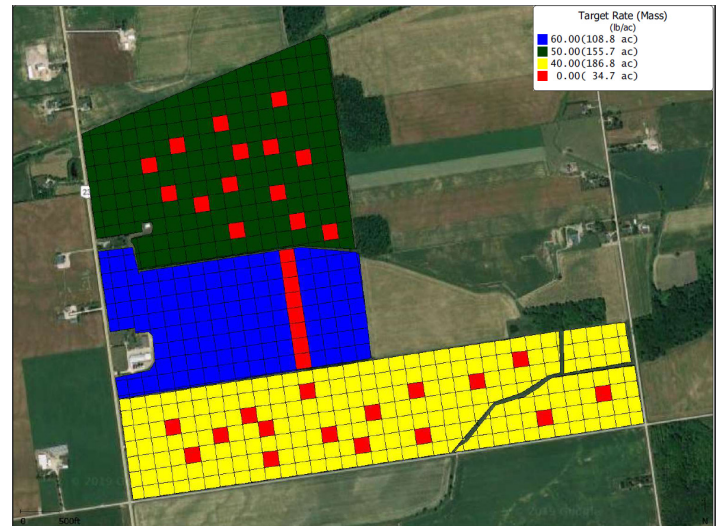
A late harvest season makes it difficult to establish cover crops in the fall, but species like cereal rye can germinate in near-freezing temperatures, taking advantage of the brief growing season remaining this year.



Conservation Services staff have teamed up with VERITAS Farm Management and Upper Medway landowners to conduct research trials on the cover crops being grown. On farms that have cover crops planted, a strip or block has been left bare in the field without cover. This area will be used as a testing area to show the impact of cover crops on soil erosion, nutrient retention and next year's crop yield. Our partnership with VERITAS is exciting, offering valuable research resources to local landowners involved.

Information from trials in the Upper Medway will be shared widely across the watershed to further promote the use of cover crops.

Contact: Mike Funk, Agricultural Soil & Water Quality Technician



Cereal rye was spread across this landowner's farm this fall, except for the areas shown in red. These areas serve as "check strips" in the field, as a way to compare the impact on soil with and without a cover crop.

Know the Signs

Have you noticed the new road signs? Drinking Water Protection Zone road signs are now up across the [Thames-Sydenham and Region](#). The new signs are being installed throughout Ontario to raise awareness about protecting drinking water sources and public health.

The Drinking Water Protection Zone signs identify areas along frequently travelled roads where a pollution spill could have a significant impact on a municipal drinking water source. They enable communities to better protect their local drinking water sources, as part of Ontario's Source Water Protection Program under the Clean Water Act.

In the event of a pollution spill, the road signs are a reminder for citizens and first responders to notify the [Spills Action Centre](#), available 24/7 at 1-866-663-8477.

Contact: Katie Ebel, Source Protection Risk Management Advisor



Interactive Student Career Day in Stratford

On Wednesday, November 13, Wildwood Education staff took part in the Interactive Career Day 2019 hosted by the Avon Maitland & Huron-Perth District school boards. The goal of the event was to engage students in grades 7-10 to participate in career-related exhibits and to gain a better understanding of local opportunities.

Staff provided students with a hands-on opportunity to learn about watersheds by using the Floodplain Model (pictured).



Students learned about the many different jobs that Conservation Authority staff do to protect people and property from flooding, both directly and indirectly. Students were also able to ask Wildwood staff about their education and career pathways to employment, make connections regarding volunteer and co-op opportunities, and explore various services provided by Conservation Authorities.

Contact: Maranda MacKean, Community Education Specialist



erosion and contribute to shoreline biodiversity. In October, UTRCA finished the cribwall area with woodchips and planted serviceberry trees, wildflowers and native grasses.

Contact: Craig Merkley, Conservation Services Specialist

Upper Avon River Conservation Club ... 26 Years and Counting



Beginning with a small meeting in 1993, landowners upstream of Stratford, in the upper Avon watershed, banded together and brought the 1952 Avon Valley Plan to life. The 1952 Plan was the vision of local farmers and the UTRCA, with assistance from certain government staff. It mapped out areas where the land was best suited for planting trees.

Fast forward 26 years to October 2019, and the [Upper Avon River Conservation Club](#) held their annual meeting in Elaine and Roger Cook's kitchen. 2020 tree planting plans were discussed and everyone enjoyed social time with neighbours, who have been working together since the initial meeting back in 1993.

Contact: Craig Merkley, Conservation Services Specialist

Lake Victoria

The City of Stratford's Energy and Environment Committee, with the support of the UTRCA, is continuing its efforts to improve the shoreline of Lake Victoria. A new cribwall was installed on the north shore earlier this year, to help to stabilize the bank against



Stream of Dreams in Stratford

During the first week in November, Community Education staff presented the Stream of Dreams Program to students and staff at Shakespeare Public School in Stratford. During the program, each class participated in science and art workshops customized to their grade and curriculum. The science workshop focused on stream health and stormwater impacts specific to the school community. In the art workshop, each student painted a recycled plastic fish





to create a “dreamfish” that represents their vision for a healthy aquatic ecosystem. More than 200 of these dreamfish were then installed on the fence at the school to create a “Stream of Dreams” mural of the school’s vision for the local watershed.

Partners in the program included the students and staff at Shakespeare School, Avon Maitland District School Board, Shakespeare Parents Council, Stratford Civic Beautification and Environmental Awareness Committee, and C.R. Plastic Products.
Contact: Vanni Azzano, Community Education Supervisor

connections, close to home, specific to the Grade 4 Rocks and Minerals curriculum. Additionally, the Pit is also conducive to learning around the Grade 4 Habitats and Communities, Grade 3 Soils in the Environment, and Growth and Changes in Plants curriculae.

Students, staff and parents alike are able to enjoy experiences in the rehabilitated rock pit learning about the uses of rock materials from the pit to build Wildwood Dam, an essential flood structure, as well as the many habitats the excavation and naturalization have produced. A fen and tall grass prairie, both rather rare habitats, as well as a pond and forested areas, all provide a backdrop for engaging with the local environment and allowing users to make connections to their surroundings, including how land and water use affect each other and how to conserve natural spaces.
Contact: Erin Dolmage, Community Education Technician



Return to the Wildwood Pit



Wildwood Community Education staff had several bookings this fall for the updated Rocks program. These bookings marked the return of environmental education programming at the Wildwood Pit. This rehabilitated gravel pit, with all its unique features, is a fantastic setting for habitat and rock studies.

The Wildwood Pit provides a great opportunity for school groups to make real world

Board of Directors – On the Agenda

The next UTRCA Board of Directors meeting will be on November 26, 2019, at the Watershed Conservation Centre, located in Fanshawe Conservation Area. Draft agendas, approved minutes, and audio recordings are posted on the “Board Agendas & Minutes” page at www.thamesriver.on.ca.

- 2020 Revised Draft Budget
- UTRCA Fee Schedule
- 2020 Board of Directors Meeting Dates
- Administration and Enforcement - Section 28
- January Election Procedures
- 2020 Biennial Tour

Note: The November Board Meeting will be followed by a tour of the Medway subwatershed for Board members.

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