



Upper Thames River
**Phosphorus Reduction
Program Guide**

2025-2026

UPPER THAMES RIVER
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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Overview

The Upper Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Program supports soil health and water quality projects that reduce phosphorus runoff from farm fields, helping Canada meet its commitments under the Canada–U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.



Applying and Process

Step 1 Review Project Guidelines

Step 2 Submit an application

Step 3 UTRCA will review, and follow up with you
Note: Applications are reviewed as they are received.

Step 4 Implement your project

Step 5 Submit the Expense Claim Form, and provide required documentation

Step 6 UTRCA inspects the final project

Step 7 Payment is issued

Funding is not guaranteed until UTRCA issues a Letter of Funding Approval. Projects must meet all guidelines, pass inspection, and undergo document review before funds are released.



Prioritization

All projects within the UTRCA watershed are eligible.
Priority will be given to:

- Designated priority subwatersheds: North Mitchell, Reynolds and Gregory Creek, as well as areas prone to erosion
- Practices that are new to your operation
- Projects in the Subsurface Placement Category: Preference will be given to no-till and strip-till systems

Those with projects outside of priority areas and those implementing their usual practices are also welcome to apply. These applications may go on a waitlist, depending on funding availability.

Eligibility

1. Applicant must be
 - Is an Ontario resident
 - A registered property owner in the UTRCA watershed
 - Per acre incentive payments may be paid to the tenant farmer
2. Project must be located in the UTRCA watershed and protect or improve water quality by reducing phosphorus transport to surface water.
3. Project must comply with all legal requirements, including municipal by-laws and Provincial Acts.
4. Applicants are responsible for all permits and approvals.

Limits to Eligibility

1. Any applicant who proceeds with a project before written confirmation has been issued, has no assurance that financial assistance will be provided.
2. An applicant must specify the fiscal year (April 1 – March 31) in which the project will be completed. If the project cannot be completed within the specified year, there is no guarantee that funding will be available in the following year.
3. Invoices must be dated between April 1 and February 28 for the fiscal year that your project is approved.
4. All projects must be completed, and claims submitted by February 28 of each year.
5. The maximum amount of funding a farm business can receive over the course of the program is \$75,000.

Participation and Data Sharing

By applying, you consent to UTRCA collecting, managing, and sharing project cost and crop management data with public and government partners to support watershed environmental goals. Data will be shared only in aggregate form, without business or personal identifiers.

By participating, you acknowledge that UTRCA may collect photos and videos for social media or print use. You also agree to project inspections during normal business hours with reasonable notice.





Project Categories

Residue Cover

Eligible Projects	Rate
Cover Crops	\$30/acre - Overwinter \$15/acre - Harvested/grazed
Reduced Tillage	\$30/acre - No Fall-Tillage or Fall Strip Till \$15/acre - Fall Vertical Tillage

Residue cover projects cannot be stacked with other programs. Incentives for reduced tillage and cover crops cannot be combined on the same field. However, a **\$10/acre bonus** is available if cover crops provide 80% residue cover over winter and the spring crop is also planted using no-till or strip-till. See pages 11-15 for project guidelines.

4R Phosphorus Management

The 4R Phosphorus management category aims to ensure phosphorus is applied following 4R principles, including rate, time and place.

New Basic Requirement A Crop Nutrient Plan is required for any field enrolled in a 4R Phosphorus Management category. Funding is available to update your plans or create new plans. Existing plans can also be used if they meet the minimum criteria for a plan (see page 18).

Eligible Projects	Rate	Limits
Crop Nutrient Planning and Soil Testing	\$10/acre - Basic sampling \$15/acre - Precision sampling	\$15,000
Manure Management	\$50/acre	\$10,000 (200 acres)
Subsurface P Placement	\$20/acre	\$15,000 (750 acres)

Stacking Incentives

- Crop Nutrient Planning can be combined with any category.
- Residue Cover and 4R Management Categories can be combined on the same field.
- Subsurface P Placement cannot be combined with Manure Management on the same field.
- Crop nutrient Planning can be combined with Manure Management or Subsurface P Placement.

See pages 17-24 for project guidelines.

Cost Sharing Opportunities

Eligible Projects	Rate	Limits
Clean Water Diversion	70%	\$8,000
Erosion Control	70%	\$8,000
Forestry and Tree Planting	50% Large Stock 75% Seedlings	\$3,000 Large Stock \$5,000 Seedlings
Innovative Actions	70%	\$5,000
Restricting Livestock Access to Watercourse and Wetlands	70%	\$5,000

See pages 25-35 for project guidelines.



Residue Cover Project Guidelines

Cover Crop Project Guidelines

Goal: to establish cover crops that will increase residue cover on fields over the winter.

Rates

\$30/Ac CC Left Overwinter

\$15/Ac Harvested/Grazed CC

- Funding cannot be stacked with other funding programs
- Incentives for reduced tillage and cover crops cannot be combined on the same field. However, a \$10/acre bonus is available if cover crops provide 80% residue cover over winter and the spring crop is also planted using no-till or strip-till.

Requirements

- Only cover crops planted in 2025 and left over winter are eligible.
- Practices from past seasons or future years will *not* be considered.
- All fields will be inspected by March 31, 2026 to determine if they meet the overwinter residue requirements of 60% residue. On a case-by-case basis, exceptions to the 60% requirement may be granted where cover crops are a new practice or where establishment of a late season cover crops was impacted by weather.

Eligible Practices

- CC seeded with or into an annual crop
- CC seeded following the harvest of an annual crop
- Single or multi-species CC
- Fall burndown allowed if spring residue meets criteria

Ineligible Practices

- Crops harvested as a marketable grain crop the next year
- Alfalfa
- Canola
- Triticale as a single species
- Planting of invasive species

Audit Process

All fields will be inspected by *March 31, 2026* to determine if they meet the overwinter residue requirements.



Reduced Tillage Project Guidelines

Goal: Reduce or eliminate fall tillage passes, leaving increased residue cover overwinter.

Rates

\$30/Ac No fall till or fall strip-till **\$15/Ac** Fall vertical till

- Funding cannot be stacked with other funding programs
- Incentives for Reduced Tillage and Cover Crops cannot be combined on the same field. However, a \$10/acre bonus is available if cover crops provide 80% residue cover over winter and the spring crop is also planted using no-till or strip-till.

Requirements

- Only reduced tillage practices implemented during 2025-2026 non-growing season (winter) are eligible. Practices from past seasons or future years will not be considered.
- All fields will be inspected by March 31, 2026 to determine if they meet overwinter residue requirements. A minimum of 60% residue is required

Eligible Practices

- No Fall Till - Crop residue left untouched overwinter. (e.g. untouched corn stalks or wheat stubble)
- Fall Strip-Till - Crop residue strip-tilled in the fall
- Fall Vertical Till - Fall vertical till crop residue
- No Till or Strip-Till - Planting of corn or beans into forage residue

Ineligible Practices

- Fall use of disk rippers or chisel plows
- Soybean/bean stubble left untouched over winter
- Any fall tillage on soybean/bean stubble
- No-till planting of winter wheat, other cereals or forages
- Perennial forages left overwinter

Audit Process

All fields will be inspected by March 31, 2026, to determine if they meet the overwinter residue requirements.





Incentive Payments

4R Phosphorus Management



New Basic Requirement A crop nutrient plan is required for any field enrolled in a 4R Phosphorus Management category. Funding is available to update your plans or create new plans. Existing plans can also be used if they meet the minimum criteria for a plan:

- Soil test within last 3 years
- Crop Nutrient Plan prepared by a CCA, agronomist, nutrient management consultant, or the applicant using AgriSuite Field Management
- Crop and yield goals
- OMAFA phosphorus recommendations

If you plan to development your own crop nutrient plan, visit AgriSuite (agrisuite.omafra.gov.on.ca)

Crop Nutrient Planning and Soil Testing Project Guidelines

Goal: Support the development of new crop nutrient plans and necessary soil/manure testing.

Rates

\$10/Ac Crop Nutrient Plan with Basic Sampling (<25/acre composite samples)

\$15/Ac Crop Nutrient Plan with Precision Sampling (<6/acre grid, or <12/acre zone)

Maximum Payment: **\$15,000**

Funding cannot be stacked with other funding programs.

Crop Nutrient Plans must be prepared by a CCA, agronomist, or the applicant using AgriSuite Field Management between April 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026.

New Plans Must Contain

- Soil tests within the last year
- Georeferenced field boundary and sample locations
- Crop and yield goals
- OMAFA phosphorus application recommendations
- Must be either:
 - 3 year plan, or
 - 1 year plan, plus commitment from service provider for an additional 2 years

Ineligible

Soil or manure sampling without a crop nutrient plan.

Manure Management

Applying Manure to Low P Soils

Project Guidelines

Goal: Incentivize the spreading of manure of fields with soil test phosphorus levels of 20ppm or less (Olsen P/BiCarb).

Rates

\$50/Ac

Maximum Payment: **\$10,000 (equivalent to 200 acres)**

Funding cannot be stacked with other funding programs.

Requirements

Soil Test

- A field soil test from the past 3 years must show a phosphorus level (Olsen P/Bicarb) of 20ppm or less.
- Must be submitted prior to manure application.

Crop Nutrient Plan

- Provide a plan prepared by a Certified Crop Advisor, an agronomist, or by the applicant using AgriSuite – Field Management.
- The plan may be an existing document or one developed through the phosphorus reduction program.
- Plan must be submitted prior to manure application.

If you plan to develop your own crop nutrient plan, please visit AgriSuite (agrisuite.omafra.gov.on.ca)

Manure Application Rate

The application rate must not exceed the nitrogen recommendations for either the current crop or the next planned crop.

Restrictions on Surface Application

- Do not surface apply on soils that are frozen, snow-covered, or saturated.
- Do not surface apply on fields where more than 1/2 inch of precipitation is expected within the next 24 hours.

Nutrient Management Compliance

All nutrient applications must adhere to the Nutrient Management Protocol for Ontario Regulation 267/03 under the Nutrient Management Act, 2022.

Timing for Manure Application

- Applications must occur between April 1 and November 1.
- Specific application methods (detailed on the next page) must be followed.



Specific Application Methods

Liquid Manure

Injection/Incorporation

- Must be injected or incorporated into the soil within 24 hours (applicable between April 1 – November 1).
- When incorporating, ensure the manure is fully mixed into the soil using a full-width disturbance tillage tool
- If applied after the harvest, a cover crop must be planted.

Surface Application on Living Residue

Alternatively, liquid manure may be surface applied on fields with at least 75% living residue cover – but only between June 15 and August 15.

Solid Manure

Injection/Incorporation

- Must be injected or incorporated into the soil within 24 hours (applicable between April 1 – November 1)
- When incorporating, ensure the manure is fully mixed into the soil using a full-width disturbance tillage tool
- If applied after harvest, a cover crop must be planted

Surface Application on Living Residue

- Alternatively, solid manure can be surface applied on fields with at least 75% residue cover (living or dead) — but only between April 20 and August 15.
- If applied after harvest, a cover crop must be planted.

Subsurface Phosphorus Placement Project Guidelines

Goal: Encourage subsurface placement of all phosphorus required for the crop.

Rates

\$20/Ac for subsurface phosphorus placement

Maximum Payment: **\$10,000 (equivalent to 750 acres)**

Funding cannot be stacked with other funding programs.

Requirements

- Crop Nutrient Plan for each field prepared by a CCA, agronomist, or by the applicant using AgriSuite Field Management. This can be an existing plan or prepared through the program. The plan must be submitted to UTRCA prior to phosphorus being applied.
- Soil test results from the field within the past 3 years showing less than 50ppm BiCarb (Olsen P). The soil tests must be sent to UTRCA prior to phosphorus being applied.
- Phosphorus placement must be at least 2 inches below soil surface.

Prioritization

- Fields in priority subwatersheds
- Fields with erodible soils
- Fields implementing new practices
- Fields in no till and strip-till systems. Fields that are tilled in the spring will be put on the waitlist.

Eligible Practices

- Phosphorus applications between June 30, 2025 – June 30, 2026
- Phosphorus fertilizer or manure injection, banding, and variable rate application
- Subsurface placement equipment, including:
 - Planter
 - Sidedress
 - Strip-till
 - Nutrient Placement Toolbars
 - Liquid Manure Injection

Ineligible Practices

- Fields with BiCarb (Olsen P) \geq 50ppm
- Applications of nitrogen
- Application of <20 lbs/acre P₂O₅
- Pop-up, in-furrow, on-the-seed applications
- Broadcast/incorporation of phosphorus
- Applications of P₂O₅ with wheat seed

If you plan to develop your own crop nutrient plan, please visit AgriSuite (agrisuite.omafra.gov.on.ca)



Cost Sharing Opportunities



Clean Water Diversion Project Guidelines

Goal: Reduce the amount of contaminated runoff from manure storages and exercise yards by diverting clean rain and snow meltwater away from sources of contamination to a satisfactory outlet.

Rates

- **70%** of eligible project costs
- Maximum Payment: **\$8,000**

Funding can be stacked with other funding programs up to 100%, if the other program allows for stacking. (Applicants must inform UTRCA of additional funding.)

Requirements

To be eligible for cost-share funding, projects must be completed and invoices must be dated between April 1, 2025 – February 28, 2026.

Eligible Projects

- Eavestroughs that direct water away from exercise yards, and manure storage areas
- Clean water diversion structures such as berms and ditches, that direct clean water away from an exercise yard, or manure storage
- Any other permanent technique to keep rain and snow from becoming contaminated by manure, or adding to the volume of contaminated runoff

Eligible Costs

Materials and labour (other than applicant's) associated with an approved project.

Ineligible Costs

- Paving of exercise yards
- Labour and machinery use of the applicant, family dependents, and the applicant's business
- Hardening (such as with concrete or asphalt) of exercise yards, laneways, and other travel routes, building floors, or any other surfaces
- Invoices not issued in the applications name or farm business
- Grant will not be paid on HST if the applicant is entitled to a HST rebate



Erosion Control Project Guidelines

Goal: Help control farmland soil erosion problems that impact surface water quality.

Rates

- 70% of eligible project costs
- Maximum Payment: **\$8,000**

Funding can be stacked with other funding programs up to 100%, if the other program allows for stacking. (Applicants must inform UTRCA of additional funding.)

Requirements

- To be eligible for cost-share funding, projects must be completed and invoices must be dated between April 1, 2025 – February 28, 2028
- Projects must be constructed to the standards specified in the OMAFA Soil Erosion Manual. Project must be designed and constructed by a qualified erosion control contractor (UTRCA can assist with the design). For more information, visit www.ontario.ca/page/soil-erosion-control-contractors-certificate-holders.

Eligible Projects

- Water and Sediment Control Basins
- Grass Waterways
- Terraces
- Rock Chutes
- Drop Structures
- Low Level Stream Crossing for livestock and equipment
- Streambank Stabilization



The labour and machinery use of the applicant, family dependents, and the applicant's business, are not eligible unless approved by the UTRCA prior to any work starting.

Eligible Costs

- Professional services and consulting fees
- Contracted labour costs
- Purchase of materials for eligible projects

Ineligible Costs

- Labour and machinery use of applicant, family dependents, and the applicant's business
- Permits and fees
- Project must not be a legislative or legal requirement
- New tile drainage that is not part of the project
- Costs associated with developing engineer reports for municipal drainage projects
- Invoices not issued in the applicant's name or farm business
- Grant will not be paid on HST if the applicant is entitled to HST rebate

General Comments

- Projects must be approved by UTRCA prior to completion to receive funding.
- Projects must be constructed to the standards specified in the OMAFA Soil Erosion Manual. Project must be designed and constructed by a qualified erosion control contractor (UTRCA can assist with the design). For more information, visit www.ontario.ca/page/soil-erosion-control-contractors-certificate-holders.
- Design by professional engineers may be advisable on complex and/or large projects. Supervision of construction is not mandatory, but may be specified as required by program representatives on large and/or complex projects.
- Preference will be given to applications that demonstrate conservation tillage and cover crop use.
- Projects must obtain approval from appropriate agencies prior to construction. Any work done on municipal drains requires prior approval from the municipality.
- All collected water must be taken to a sufficient and legal outlet.
- UTRCA staff should complete final inspection and ensure the project meets the requirements for funding.

Forestry and Tree Planting Project Guidelines

Goal: Improve water quality by planting trees and shrubs to retire fragile agricultural, plant field windbreaks, or create buffers along watercourses and wetlands.

Rates

Large Stock

- **50%** of eligible project costs
- Maximum Payment: **\$3,000**

Seedlings

- **75%** of eligible project costs
- Maximum Payment: **\$5,000**

Funding can be stacked with other funding programs up to 100%, if the other program allows for stacking. (Applicants must inform UTRCA of additional funding.)

Requirements

Landowners planting 50+ trees on their own are eligible to apply for funding. Applicant must provide planting location, description of the project, and before and after photos.

Eligible Projects

- Permanent retirement of floodplain
- Permanent retirement of steeply sloped and/or erosion-prone lands
- Buffer strips along watercourses and wetlands adjacent to either pasture or cropped land (minimum buffer width of 10 ft required)
- Field windbreaks to prevent wind erosion

Eligible Costs

- Professional services and consulting fees
- Purchase of native trees and shrubs
- Contracted labour and planting costs
- Tree protection systems and maintenance agreement costs obtained through the UTRCA or planting contractor
- Establishment of cover crop used in conjunction with tree planting project

Eligible Costs

- Farmstead shelterbelts to protect buildings
- Landscaping for aesthetic or privacy purposes
- Labour and machinery use of applicant, family dependents, and the applicant's business
- Permits and fees
- Project must not be a legislative or legal requirement
- Commercial stock, fruit trees or Christmas tree species that are commercially marketable in less than 15 years
- Invoices not issued in the applicant's name or farm business
- Grant will not be paid on HST if the applicant is entitled to HST rebate

Innovation Actions Project Guidelines

We're looking for innovative project ideas that may not fit into our traditional categories. If you have a creative approach to phosphorus reduction on your land, we would love to hear about it!

Rates

- 70% of eligible project costs
- Maximum Payment: **\$5,000**



Livestock Watercourse Fencing Project Guidelines

Goal: Improve surface water quality by restricting livestock access to watercourses and wetlands.

Rates

- **70%** of eligible project costs
- Maximum Payment: **\$5,000**

Funding can be stacked with other funding programs up to 100%, if the other program allows for stacking. (Applicants must inform UTRCA of additional funding.)

Project Details

To be eligible for cost-share funding, projects must be completed and invoices must be dated between April 1, 2025 – February 28, 2026. The maximum cost share will not exceed \$5/foot installed or \$4/foot for materials.

Solid Manure

- Temporary fencing will be considered eligible but will require a signed agreement requiring the applicant to install the fence prior to livestock being introduced to the pasture every year and to maintain the fence while livestock are present in the pasture.
- Fencing must be at least 10 feet (3.4 m) from the top of the bank of any watercourse unless access for drain maintenance is required.
- Only fencing along a ditch/watercourse or wetland will be considered for funding.

Alternative Water Systems

- Temporary fencing will be considered eligible but will require a signed agreement requiring the applicant to install the fence prior to livestock being introduced to the pasture every year and to maintain the fence while livestock are present in the pasture.
- Fencing must be at least 10 feet (3.4 m) from the top of the bank of any watercourse unless access for drain maintenance is required.
- Only fencing along a ditch/watercourse or wetland will be considered for funding.

Projects in and along waterways and ditches may need approval by municipalities, the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, or the Conservation Authority prior to implementation. Any work done on municipal drains also requires prior approval from the municipality. The applicant is responsible for acquiring all necessary approvals.

Eligible Projects

- Fencing along watercourses and wetlands.
- Alternative watering devices.

Eligible Costs

- Engineering fees
- Labour (other than applicant or their dependent family)
- Permanent and temporary fencing
- Alternative water devices such as nose pumps, spring boxes, wind and solar powered pumping units (other systems may be considered)

Ineligible Costs

- New operations or a change in management are ineligible
- Primary hydro lines
- Permits
- Cost of drilling new wells
- Labour and machinery use of the applicant, family dependents, and the applicant's business
- Invoices not in the applicant's name or farm business
- Grant will not be paid on HST if the applicant is entitled to HST rebate

Ready to Apply?

Visit our dedicated Phosphorus Reduction Program page for our quick and easy application, or scan the QR code below!

Contacts



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UTRCA Agricultural Stewardship Specialist

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UTRCA Supervisor, Forestry and Restoration

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For **Forestry and Tree Planting Projects** contact Rob.



◀ scan to apply



Looking for more funding opportunities with UTRCA?

Clean Water Program

A rural water quality initiative providing technical assistance and financial incentives to improve and protect water quality on your farm.



Tree Planting Program

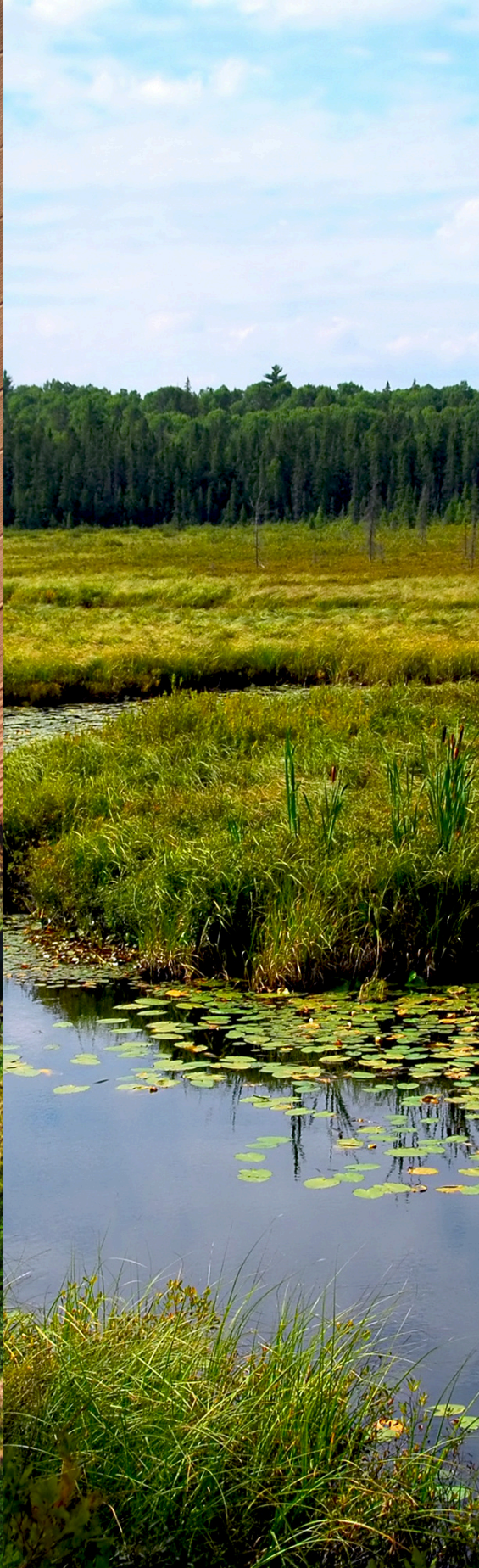
This program supports landowners with at least 2.5 acres interested in tree planting. Projects can include windbreaks, erosion control, watercourse buffers, and creating wildlife habitat.





Neighbouring Conservation Authorities

Ausable Bayfield	519.235.2610 ext. 263 nschoelier@abca.ca
Catfish Creek	519.773.9037 ext. 18 planning@catfishcreek.ca
Grand River	519.621.2763 ext. 2278 ruralwater@grandriver.ca
Kettle Creek	519.631.1270 ext.229 betsy@kettlecreekconservation.ca
Long Point Region	519.842.4242 ext. 236 watercare@lprca.on.ca
Lower Thames Valley	519.354.7310 ext. 235 stewardship@ltvca.ca
Maitland Valley	519.335.3557 ext. 245 bvandieten@mvca.ca



Sign up for our Stewardship e-newsletter!



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