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May 2022



Palm Warbler

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## Happy to be back at Public Events!

The Fanshawe Community Education Team is excited to be back working in the local community and participating in public events this spring. During April and May, staff participated in EarthFest, the City of London's Emergency Preparedness Open House, and Western University's Science Rendezvous.



The UTRCA booth at London EarthFest

London's first ever EarthFest was held at Victoria Park on Earth Day. The event featured activities, booths, live music, and a Climate March around the downtown core. The UTRCA booth focused on climate change and flooding, and showcased how Low Impact Development (LID) features can help reduce flooding in our local communities.

At the Emergency Preparedness Open House, young families came out to learn about the various organizations in London that help keep citizens safe as well as what to do in different emergency situations. The UTRCA



UTRCA staff at the Emergency Preparedness Open House

booth focused on flooding and how flood structures (e.g., dams, dykes) and natural areas (e.g., wetlands, parks, LIDs) can help protect us from flooding. Kids walked away with a River Safety activity booklet and bookmark reminding them how to stay safe near rivers, creeks, and streams.

The Science Rendezvous at Western University was extremely busy this year, with more than 3,000 people in attendance. The UTRCA booth was once again a huge hit with an interactive flood plain model and a flood hazards puzzle.

Staff are very happy to be back in-person and interacting with the public at these events.

It's clear to see how valuable the UTRCA's presence is as staff are able to make connections with residents and spread the conservation message.

**Contact:**  
**Karlee Flear,**  
**Community**  
**Education Supervisor (Fanshawe)**



UTRCA booth at Western's Science Rendezvous

## River Safety 2022

This spring Fanshawe Community Education staff were very excited to have permission to go back into TVDSB classrooms and teach grade 2 students how to be safe around rivers, creeks and streams!

With generous funding from TVDSB and local Optimist and Lions groups, staff visited 19 schools and reached approximately 900 students.



River Safety at John Dearness Public School

Students hear the story of "The Journey of Splish and Splash," about a couple children who encounter two water droplets that share

their tale of navigating their way through the water cycle. They encounter dams, frozen ponds, and waterfalls and alert us all how to stay safe near all types of water.

Students participate in putting together a large wooden puzzle. Each puzzle piece has a clue attached that refers to topics such as flood water awareness near stormwater management ponds, dams, local streets, and parks. Some puzzle pieces are pictures of local species of fauna that depend on our local fresh water for survival.

Lastly, a slide show presentation promotes discussion using measurement by asking students questions such as, "How much water does it take to be swept off your feet?" and "How much water does it take to make a car float?" Photos of local parks and other flood plains in the London area in various stages of flooding are viewed and explored as to how we can stay safe in these areas.

Students and teachers are engaged and excited to be involved in this important flood awareness program! The message has been the same for over two decades, but the value of the message is as important as ever.

Thank you to the following sponsors of the 2022 River Safety program:

- Thames Valley District School Board
- Byron Optimist Club
- East London Optimist Club
- London Carling Heights Optimist Club
- London Oakridge Acres Optimist Club
- Arva and District Optimist Club
- Thorndale Optimist Club
- Byranston-Birr Optimist Club
- Thamesford Lions Club

**Contact: Kim Gilbert, Community Education Technician**

## STEM Programs

Fanshawe Community Education staff were delighted to return to classrooms in March and April, to deliver the flood-focused STEM programs. After a long COVID break from team-based activities and guest presenters,



students and teachers were eager to participate in the hands-on experiments, demonstrations, and model building that are the core of these unique programs. Students learned about the local problem of flooding in London, made predictions and engineering decisions, and suggested improvements to the landscape to reduce flooding and erosion.



Students explore how to reduce flooding and erosion.

In addition to being curriculum-connected and interdisciplinary, the STEM programs encourage students to practice valuable global competency skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration. In total, nine Grade 5 classes and four Grade 3 classes participated, totalling approximately 280 students. The STEM programs were funded by the Thames Valley District School Board.

**Contact: Fiona Navickas, Community Education Specialist**

### **Award-winning Author joins UTRCA for Nature Nearby**

It was a pleasure and an honour to have Jon-Erik Lappano, Governor General Literary Award recipient and author of the book, *Martin and the River*, join the Nature Nearby events offered in Mitchell and St. Marys on May 7. The inspiration for the programs and Jon-Erik's participation was sparked by his



Author Jon-Erik Lappano read his book to the young audience, with the North Thames River behind him.

book's message that meaningful connections to nature can be found anywhere and everywhere. This message fits perfectly with the purpose and intent of the Nature Nearby program and was a natural fit.

"From a young age, I have found meaning and connection in nature, and I continue to have a curiosity and wonder for the world around me, which is reflected in my work as a writer. *Martin and the River*, specifically, is dedicated to the North Thames River, a natural space where I spent some of the fondest hours of my childhood," said Jon-Erik.

Residents from across the watershed listened as Jon-Erik read his book on the banks of the North Thames, and celebrated connections to nature and the river. Everyone, including the author, participated in the activities that accompanied the reading in both communities.

The UTRCA launched the family friendly Nature Nearby program in the fall of 2021. The program is provided free of charge, thanks to sponsorship by the Rotary Clubs of Mitchell and St. Marys, as well as the Festival City Rotary Club of Stratford.

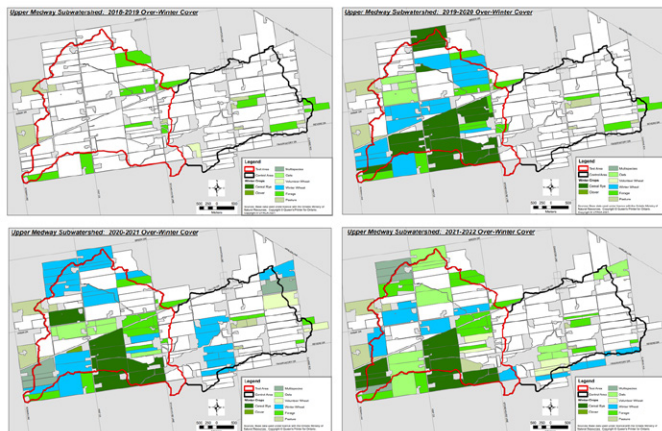
**Contact: Maranda MacKean, Community Education Specialist**

## Upper Medway Cover Crop Project wraps up

The UTRCA has been monitoring the upper Medway Creek since 2016 to study how phosphorus moves through the landscape and how farm practices may affect the movement of this nutrient. In 2018, the upper Medway became Ontario's first subwatershed-scale testing grounds for cover crops. The project wrapped up in March 2022 after a very successful four years, thanks in large part to the great group of farmers involved, and their interest and willingness to participate.

The project goal was to have at least 75% of the watershed's west "test" area planted each year with cover crops that would keep at least 60% residue cover through the non-growing season. The water quality in this area was then compared to the water quality in the east "control" area, where there was no extra incentive provided to plant cover crops.

The project achieved approximately 75% ground coverage over the winter for three straight winters, as shown in the maps. Data analysis from the water samples collected over the four year period is currently underway and will be useful to inform interested groups, including the agricultural community, environmental organizations, government, and academia, on how adopting cover crops may support water quality targets for Lake Erie.



Four years of overwinter cover crops in the test (red boundary) and control (black boundary) watersheds. The coloured areas indicate various types of winter crops.

The project also looked at possible differences in soil moisture, temperature, and residue between areas of the field with and without a cover crop, as well as whether the presence of a cover crop impacted the crop yield in the following growing season. Data collected to date has not shown a difference in yield from the following crop, even under conditions where temperature and moisture varied within the field. This information is important in addressing common concerns with cover crop adoption.



Comparing spring temperature, moisture, and residue, before soybean planting, between areas with (background) and without (foreground) a cereal rye cover crop.

**Contact: Tatianna Lozier, Conservation Services Specialist (acting)**

## 20 Years of Watershed Report Cards

The 2022 Upper Thames River [Watershed Report Cards](#) are scheduled for publication this fall. This marks the 20th year of the UTRCA delivering state of the environment information to watershed residents through these reports.

The UTRCA has published report cards every five years beginning with the first set in 2001. It takes a team of staff to compile the extensive environmental information, data, and mapping that go into the report card for each of the 28 watersheds in the Upper Thames. Staff grade surface water quality and forest conditions, and summarize watershed features, including valuable features in



need of protection such as wetlands, natural areas, fish, species at risk, and groundwater resources.

The report cards also track environmental and other changes impacting the watershed. For example, recent census data shows the watershed's human population has increased by 54,000 in the past five years. Much work is being done locally to protect the environment. Staff gather this information for each watershed to highlight some actions of the many partners, municipalities, groups, and industry.



Looking back: Staff launch the 2012 Upper Thames River Watershed Report Cards.

Since 2012, all the other Conservation Authorities across Ontario have also been producing watershed report cards every five years, using standardized grading and information modelled after the UTRCA's early report cards. These documents, which are summarized by Conservation Ontario, have become widely recognized, and create awareness of the value of the Conservation Authorities' on-going environmental monitoring programs.

The report cards give municipalities, the public, and other partners a look at the health of their local watersheds and what actions to take, while enabling comparisons to be made across watershed boundaries and across the province.

**Contact: Cathy Quinlan, Terrestrial Biologist, and Karen Maaskant, Water Quality Specialist**

### On the Board Agenda

The next Board of Directors meeting will be held virtually on May 24, 2022. The following items are on the draft agenda:

- Report from the Finance and Audit Committee: Approval of Audited Financial Statements for 2021
- Provincial Offences Act Designations
- Administration and Enforcement: Section 28 Status Report
- Bill 109 Update
- Conservation Authorities Act Update: Phase 2 Regulations

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