

ANNUAL REPORT 2014



Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority



“protecting and enhancing the environment”

Message from the Chair



Brian W. King

Brian King
Chair LTVCA

Over the past 14 years, I have had the privilege of serving as a Director on the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority's (LTVCA) Board, representing the Municipality of Chatham-Kent. I have witnessed the evolution of many programs and services to best serve our communities. As Chair for ten of those years, I recognize and thank the Directors of our Board and Committees for their support, commitment and meeting contributions. Their knowledge reaches beyond political boundaries, benefiting the entire Lower Thames region. I encourage the new Chair, with the support of our 10 member municipalities, to welcome change, and to continue to embrace new conservation strategies.

I am pleased to offer this annual report, which provides a snapshot of our work made possible through valuable community and government partnerships. 2014 was a very productive year, with a focus on collaboration and coordinated approaches to watershed management. The LTVCA took great strides towards achieving its goal

of protecting and enhancing our watershed and region's environment. We are grateful to have leveraged nearly \$850,000 of funding for environmental projects and services, over and above our annual budget. These dollars, coupled with 900 volunteers donating 2,600 hours of their time, enabled our small team of dedicated staff to deliver a strong and vibrant program. We must continue our work together, using sound stewardship practices to meet challenges presented by climate change, especially in the western Lake Erie basin.

At year-end, a strategic review of our program and operations was underway, engaging all staff, the Board of Directors and key partners. This process will determine the future direction of the Conservation Authority's watershed stewardship and environmental protection. Connecting with our watershed community will help us continue to make wise decisions to protect life and property, protect and restore habitat, research and monitor watershed resources and provide opportunities to enjoy, learn and respect the environment today and in the future.

General Manager's Remarks



Don Pearson

Don Pearson
General Manager LTVCA

It is always gratifying to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year as highlighted within these pages. Although relatively few in number, given the size of our area of jurisdiction, the issues, and the scope of our programs, our team of dedicated staff continue to rise to the challenge.

A number of programs were initiated or advanced including our Benthic Monitoring Program; an enhanced Greening Partnership; and a nutrient management program that will assist efforts to reduce phosphorus loading to Lake Erie. A Drinking Water Source Protection Plan was submitted at year end for provincial review and approval, bringing a complex and lengthy process to an important milestone. Another milestone was the retirement of two long-term employees, Sharlet Piggott and Sandy Maynard. Their contributions are

recognized and appreciated and we wish them both well in their retirement.

Late in 2014, the LTVCA initiated a Strategic Planning Process, which will assist in our understanding of how to best meet the challenges of the future, increasing our organizational capacity within the realistic fiscal limits of our funding partners. This process is timely, given that our Board of 12 Directors will in 2015 consist of seven new members! Coupled with new staff additions in 2014, this pool of new perspectives, ideas and talent, engaged in this important critical thinking process, will be key in reaching new levels of achievement.

I would like to express appreciation to all outgoing members of the Board as well as staff, who have been both a pleasure to work with and dedicated in their service.

Our Vision ~ Protecting and enhancing the environment



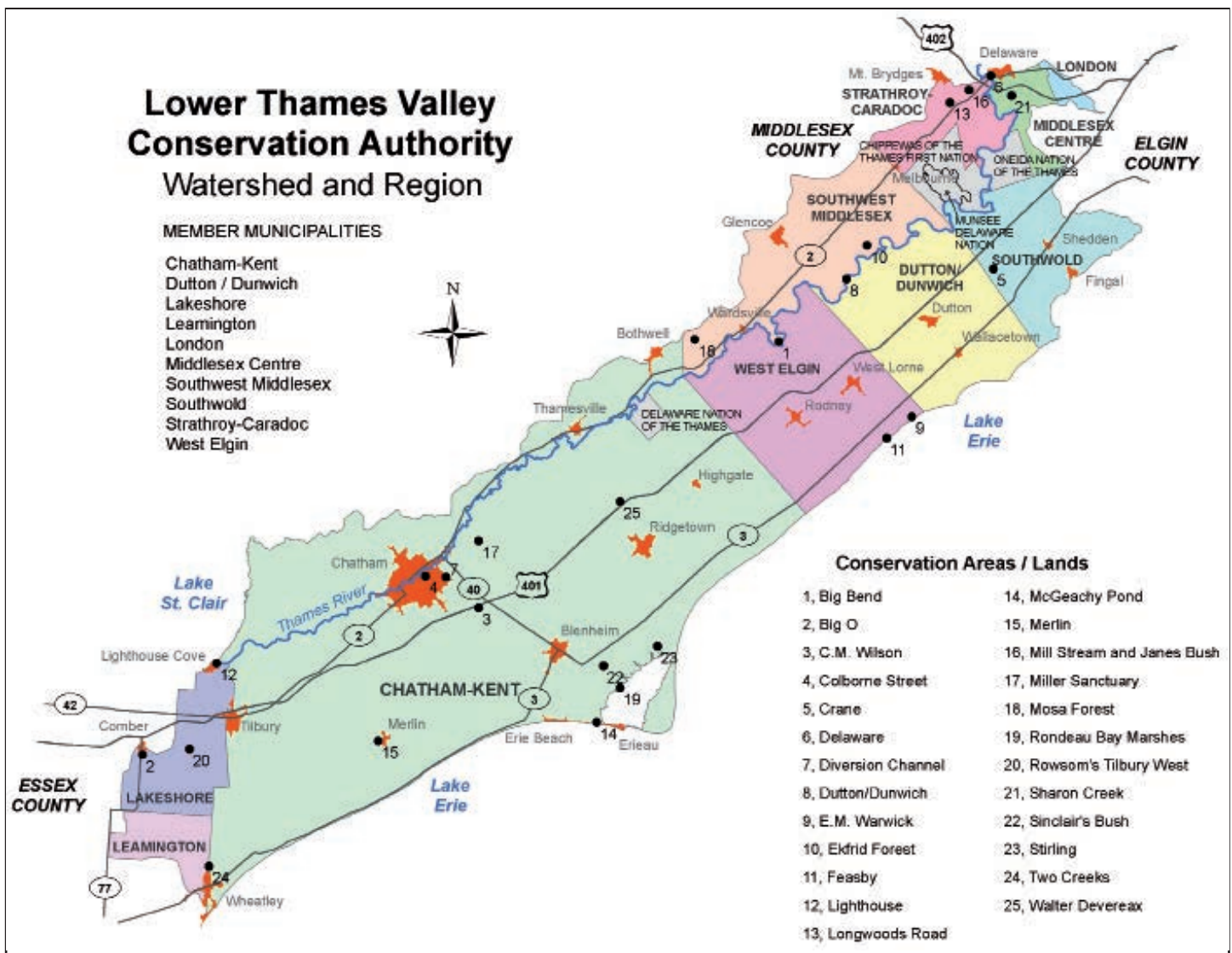
“The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority (LTVCA) is a watershed-based partner, working with the local community, providing services and information to efficiently protect and enhance the environment for present and future generations.”



The LTVCA is one of 36 Conservation Authorities in the Province of Ontario. Member of Conservation Ontario.

Our Objectives are ...

- Protecting Life & Property
- Protecting & Restoring Habitat
- Research & Monitoring
- Providing Opportunities to Enjoy, Learn & Respect
- Partnering with the Local Community



Area of jurisdiction lies over the watersheds of all streams, which drain into the Thames River from the Village of Delaware, to Lake St. Clair. Southern boundary has jurisdiction over the watersheds of all streams which drain into Lake Erie, from the Talbot Creek watershed in the east, to the Two Creeks watershed in the west. Total area covers over 3,275 square kilometres (1,264 square miles) in southwestern Ontario and is home to over 120,000 people.

Board & Staff Directory

LTVCA Directors

Brian King (Chair) - Municipality of Chatham-Kent

John Kavelaars (Vice-Chair) - Municipality of Southwest Middlesex

Albert Bannister - Municipality of Middlesex Centre

Michael Bondy - Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Stanley Caveney - City of London

Ron Doane - Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc

Ian Fleck - Municipality of Dutton / Dunwich

Grant Jones - Township of Southwold

Linda McKinlay - Town of Lakeshore

Norm Miller - Municipality of West Elgin

Steve Pinsonneault - Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Charlie Wright - Municipality of Leamington

Ska-Nah-Doht Village Advisory Committee

Ron Watts - Chair

Don Fairbairn - Vice-chair

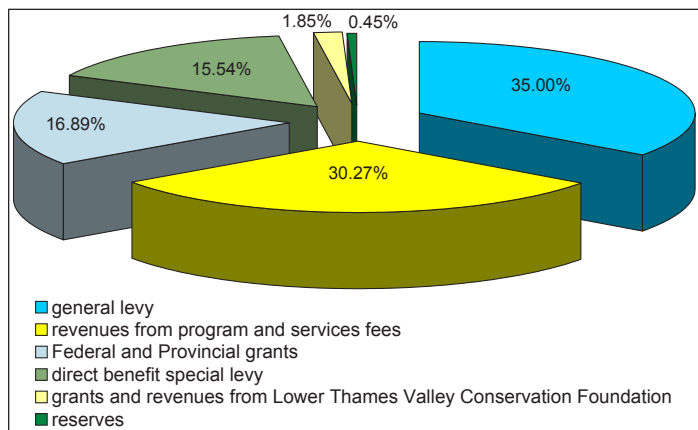
Brian King, John Kavelaars, Ron Doane, Stanley Caveney,

Grant Jones, Glenn Stott, Stan Lidster, Conrad Wodrich,

Darcy Fallon, Don Pearson

Budget

Don Pearson - General Manager / Secretary-Treasurer, directed the administration and financial aspects of the LTVCA, with support from Accounting Clerks - Sharlet Piggott and Sandy Maynard who both retired during the year being, capably succeeded by Mary Pearson, Kally Casier and Todd Casier.



The LTVCA's budget of \$2,245,649 received approval in February.

LTVCA Full-time Staff

Don Pearson - General Manager / Secretary-Treasurer

Stephanie Allison - GIS / Communications

Lindsay Bennett - Land Stewardship Technician

Mike Bутtenham - Agricultural Specialist

Kally Casier - Accounting Clerk

Todd Casier - Financial Specialist

Bonnie Carey - Community Relations Coordinator

Bruce Clark - Construction & Maintenance Technician

Jerry DeZwart - Conservation Education Technician

Russ Dysarz - Western District Supervisor

David Little - Eastern District Supervisor

Karen Mattila - Ska-Nah-Doht Village & Museum Curator

Rose Nicholas - Ska-Nah-Doht Village Education Technician

Jessica Schnaithmann - Regulation & Planning Technician

Valerie Towsley - Resource Technician

Greg VanEvery - Environmental Technical Assistant

Randall VanWagner - Environmental Project Coordinator

Agnes Vriends - Clerk / Secretary

Jason Wintermute - Water Management Supervisor / GIS Specialist

Chris Tasker - Source Protection Manager of the Thames, Sydenham & Region Source Protection Region

LTVCA Contract Staff

Brian Armstrong – Gatehouse/Security

Brain Boland – Security

Alexis Castrogiovanni – Community Activities Coordinator

Julia Castrogiovanni – Exhibition Design Assistant

Kelly Johnson – Community Trees Initiative Coordinator

Becky Johnstone – Gatehouse

Codie Kish - Visitor Services

Paul Kominek – Assistant Water and Resources Tech

Michael Latham – General Labourer

Sandy Maynard - Accounting Clerk (retired)

Buddy Morrison – General Labour / Security

Mary Pearson - Accounting Clerk

Sharlet Piggott - Accounting Clerk (retired)

Gary Reissner – General Labourer

Lindsay Swackhammer – Assistant Water Resources Technician / GIS Assistant

Blake Sykes – General Labour / Security

Brooke Williams – Visitor Services / Heritage Guide



The Thames River celebrated its fourteenth year as a Canadian Heritage River. Thousands of volunteers cleaned up hundreds of kilometres along the river during the fifteenth Annual Thames River Clean-up in April.

Protecting Life & Property

Water Management

The water management and technical services program provides science-based support for land and water resources management, including natural heritage programs, as well as technical expertise to forecast, control and monitor floods and erosion to protect life and property. Jason Wintermute is the Water Management Supervisor.

Flood Control

There was a greater potential for flooding in 2014, but the weather seemed to always turn favourable. The winter was unusually cold and snowy with a greater depth of snow and ice on the Thames River, than had been seen in several years. The risk of ice jams was elevated and the LTVCA and member municipalities were preparing for such a situation. However, there was a very orderly spring thaw. Three melt events occurred on January 15th, March 22nd and April 5th, each producing flows of approximately 350 m³/s on the Thames River, barely meeting the threshold for issuing advisories.

A series of smaller rain events together with thunderstorms led to flooding on the region's smaller watercourses and the Indian-McGregor Creek Diversion Channel was operated on May 15th and 16th. The largest flow event of the year for the Thames River occurred in late November, peaking at 400 m³/s on November 26th in Dutton-Dunwich and November 27th in Thamesville. Flooding from this event was restricted to the low-lying river flats adjacent to the Thames River. In total, there were 19 flood advisories issued throughout the year.



An April 14th runoff event flooded low lying areas in Chatham along the McGregor Creek.

Provincial Grant Funding for Capital Maintenance & Flood Forecasting

The LTVCA receives annual funding from the province for the operation, routine minor and preventative maintenance of flood and erosion control projects, flood forecasting and warning, chronic ice management, legal costs for ongoing joint LTVCA /Provincial capital projects, watershed management and related administration.

Great Lakes Levels

Lake St. Clair water levels began the year 10-15 cm below the long-term normal for January. Water levels climbed rapidly during the spring, with September levels 15-20 cm above the long-term normal. Lake Erie water levels began the year approximately at the long-term normal for January. Levels generally followed the seasonal trends, rising to 10 cm above the long-term normal in July and ending the year 15 cm above the long-term normal. One advisory was issued on December 24th for the Lake Erie communities of Erie Shores Drive, Erie Beach and Erieau. High winds up to 60 km/hr gusting to 100 km/hr had potential to create storm surge waves in excess of 2.0 m height with the potential to cause localized flooding and erosion. No damage was reported to the LTVCA.



The winter was unusually cold and snowy with a greater depth of snow and ice on the Thames River. The risk of ice jams was elevated and the LTVCA and member municipalities were preparing for such a situation. The Conservation Authority took snow and ice measurements in February, which provided vital information to help prepare municipalities.

Provincial Water Monitoring

The LTVCA partners with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment on the Provincial Groundwater and the Provincial (Stream) Water Quality Monitoring Programs. This program assists in environmental reporting, decision-making, and program implementation by the Conservation Authority, member municipalities and the province.

Groundwater monitoring is conducted at nine wells throughout the watershed with the use of water level loggers and supplemental rain and barometric pressure loggers. The wells are sampled every fall for water quality. The LTVCA maintains the instrumentation, samples the wells, and undertakes data corrections.

Stream water quality sampling is conducted at 11 locations throughout the watershed. The Conservation Authority samples monthly in the spring, summer and fall for general water chemistry. Since biological analyses are not part of the provincial program, the LTVCA tests for e-coli at the same sites. Currently, the program is supplemented with pesticide monitoring at three sites.

Ontario Low Water Response Program

The LTVCA participates in a provincial program that monitors watershed conditions to determine if the area is in a low water (drought) situation. It was wet enough during the year that Low Water Conditions did not need to be declared and the local low water response team was not required to meet. Regular reporting of watershed conditions was still communicated by email.

Thames River Clearwater Revival

This multi-year endeavour focuses on the completion of a Watershed Strategy, leading to an updated Water Management Plan as priority. This project is expected to run through to December 2016. Partners include Environment Canada, First Nations communities, provincial ministries, the Upper Thames River and Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authorities and the City of London. New funding sources are being sought to carry out studies and projects linked to the creation of the Water Management Plan. The LTVCA provides membership on the Steering and Technical Committees and the Communications Working Group, supplying data, technical advice, and peer review.

A Technical Symposium was held December 2nd and 3rd at the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority's Watershed Conservation Centre in London. Topics included: First Nations Traditional Ecological Knowledge; Thames River Water Quality Assessment; Agricultural Best Management Practices for Increased Flows and Climate Change; Rural Landowner Behaviors and Attitudes; Low Impact Development; Water Quantity Management Issues Related to Flooding and Climate Change; Merging Rain Gauge and Weather Radar Data to Estimate Precipitation; Upper Thames River Stream Flow Statistics; Digital Elevation Mapping; Hydraulic Modeling using GIS, Digital Elevation Mapping and Survey Data.

Land Use Planning & Regulations



Municipal Plan Input & Review Under the Conservation Authorities Act

The land use planning and regulations program provides environmental planning expertise to guide municipal and other land-use planning decisions on a watershed basis, consistent with current applicable Federal and Provincial legislation and policies, and Conservation Authority and municipal planning policy. Valerie Towsley, Jason Wintermute and Jessica Schnaithmann are the staff responsible for administering the land use planning and regulations program.

Lake water breaches the end of a steel wall with water going under a back deck leaving the septic tank exposed. This is due to neighbouring jetties preventing sediment from naturally transporting down drift.

At right are the municipal plan reviews summaries for the year. Plan input and review is one of the ways the Conservation Authority monitors development and achieves its objectives. The input the LTVCA has on new development near or in natural hazard areas like flood plains and steep slopes ensures identification of potential hazards before complications arise.

Official Plans			1		1							1
Official Plan Amendments	5			4	2	1						
Comprehensive Zoning Bylaws			1									1
Zoning Bylaw Amendments	53	2	4			2	10	9	1		9	
Severances	60	4	4	3			6	10	1		9	
Minor Variances	25	1	1				1	1	3	4	3	
Plans of Subdivision	2											1
Property Clearances	30	1	6	3			1		2		4	
Drainage Reports & Maintenance	60	21	7	2			5	10	11			
General Property Inquiries	510	61	73	5	1	14	21	10	23	85		57
TOTAL SERVICES PER MUNICIPALITY	745	90	97	17	4	18	44	42	42	112	58	
SERVICES												
MUNICIPALITY	Chatham-Kent	Dutton/Dunwich	Lakeshore	Leamington	London	Middlesex Centre	Southwest Middlesex	Southwold	Strathroy-Caradoc	West Elgin	Counties - General Inquiries	

Development, Interference with Wetlands & Alterations to Shorelines & Watercourses Regulation

The LTVCA reviewed 233 applications under the Regulation, a slight decrease of 25 permits from 2013. Landowners submitted 112 applications, seven of which were for habitat projects through the Elgin Clean Water Program. Five submissions were received from Union Gas for directional drills and 116 were for engineers' reports and maintenance work on municipal drains across the watershed. Nine applications went before the Hearings Committee, two being approved with conditions, and four being denied.

Drainage Superintendents Association

The LTVCA is a long-standing associate member of the Chatham-Kent-Essex Chapter of the Drainage Superintendents Association of Ontario. The watershed consists of highly drained agricultural lands and is managed under both the Drainage Act and the LTVCA's regulations. Cooperation and good relationships with our region's Drainage Superintendents are extremely important.

Elgin County Shoreline Study

Four Conservation Authorities formed a collaborative with the County of Elgin and the Municipalities of Dutton/Dunwich, West Elgin, Central Elgin and Bayham, and the Townships of Southwold and Malahide to create a Shoreline Management Plan with a consistent approach across the entire shoreline of Elgin County. The plan will incorporate current mapping and technical standards for flooding, wave uprush, erosion and dynamic beaches. It will examine the hazards and protection along the shoreline, providing recommendations for sustainable development of the shoreline ecosystems and land uses. The study will be finalized in early 2015.



Lake Erie bluff erosion continues to present challenges to landowners and municipalities.

Protecting & Restoring Habitat

Tree Planting, Restoration, Stewardship

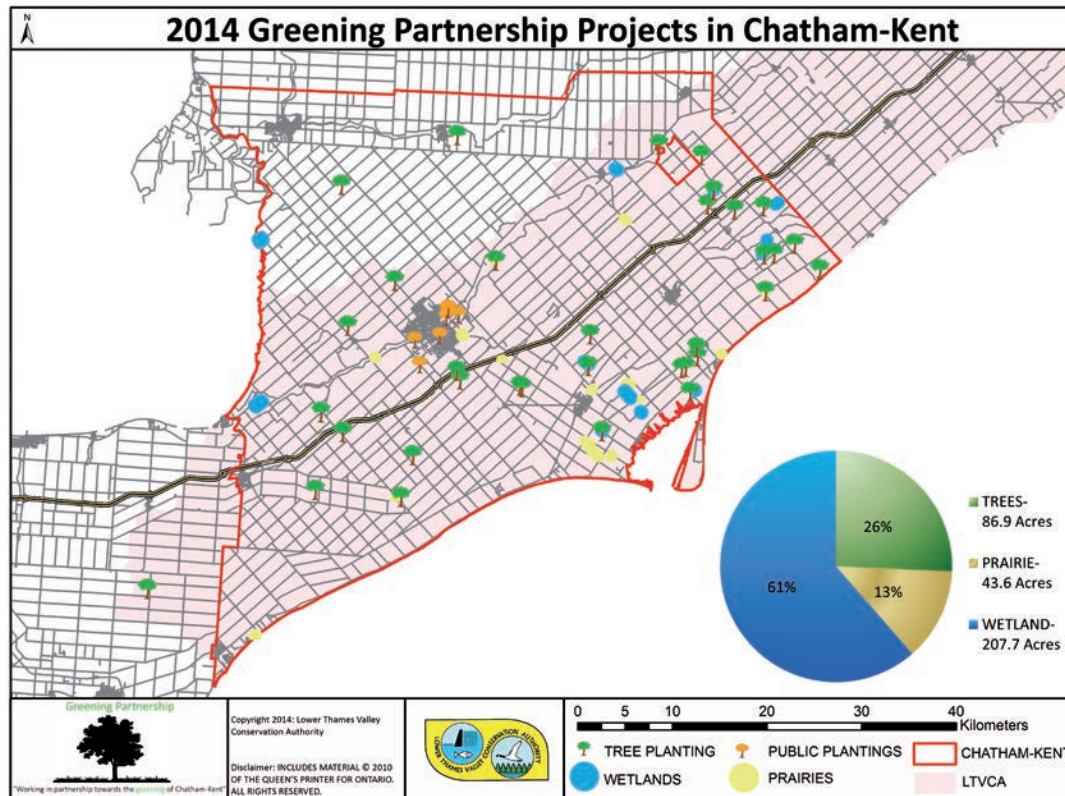
Chatham-Kent Greening Partnership

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent recognizes that a 'greening' effort is needed to address environmental concerns. A partnership formed with the LTVCA provides municipal funding to support four positions at LTVCA - Randall Van Wagner, Greg Van Every, Lindsay Bennett and Stephanie Allison. Program staff apply for tree planting grants, and funding for wetland creation and tallgrass prairie projects in an effort to restore habitat as well as educate and build awareness about the importance of a healthy environment.

The Greening Partnership has a proven track record of providing three dollars towards restoration for every dollar invested by Chatham-Kent. Nearly \$800,000 in grants were generated for environmental restoration from various sources including: the Ontario Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Affairs; Natural Resources; and Environment and Climate Change; Ontario Power Generation; Canada Ontario Agreement; Trees Ontario; World Wildlife Fund and Great Lakes Guardian Fund. Over 87 acres (35 ha) were reforested, 44 acres (18 ha) of prairie were planted and over 207 acres (84 ha) of wetlands were restored. Across the entire watershed, 69,036 trees were planted.



The Curran family of Thamesville understands the importance of habitat restoration and agreed to have 25 acres (10 ha) of their land converted to wetlands. The Curran Family attended a wetland dedication event with representatives from Ducks Unlimited, Union Gas and The Municipality of Chatham-Kent.



Natural Heritage Implementation Strategy (NHIS)

The purpose of the NHIS is to identify how the Municipality of Chatham-Kent will work with all sectors of the community to maintain and enhance the natural heritage system within the municipality, and manage collectively, the greater ecological goods and services that are a benefit to all members of society. Through this strategy, two new positions were hired for the Greening Partnership this year: a Land Stewardship Technician and a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) /Communications Technician.

In the Community

The Greening Partnership must be active in engaging the community for the NHIS to succeed.

Friends of Rowsom's – The 2nd Annual Friends of Rowsom Conservation Area cleanup was held on October 25th. Over the last three years, \$30,000 has been spent for the improvement of this property. **Tomorrow's Greener Schools ...Today** – This fall the Greening Partnership

joined the Chatham-Kent Health Unit for the schoolyard tree planting initiative at seven schools in the area. A total of 51 trees were planted at these schools, which will provide various health and environmental benefits. **The Community Trees Initiative** - An outdoor classroom project was initiated with the Merlin Public School, which received funding from many sources including the Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds grant. The classroom will tie into the recently created new trail at the Merlin Conservation Area property to the south.



Many thanks to the Friends of Rowsom Conservation Area volunteers. Fifteen people from the Comber area came out to plant trees, work on the new trail and pick up litter.

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)

Through an OMAFRA grant, research projects in the LTVCA will help government officials and conservation staff to improve their understanding of the movement of nutrients and soil across the landscape and ultimately into our waterways. Michael Battenham was hired through this program and is our new Agricultural Specialist. His role is to foster improved relations with our agricultural community and assist landowners with Best Management Practices to mitigate phosphorus impacts within Lake Erie.

Benthic Monitoring Program

The LTVCA Benthic Monitoring Program was initiated in 2014. Ten different streams across the watershed were sampled for benthic macroinvertebrates. With help from our summer students, samples were collected throughout late May until the middle of June and preserved in ethanol until the organisms could be identified. Benthic results were consistent but disappointing - nine out of 10 of locations placed an FBI Index - (Family Biotic Index) of Fairly Poor or worse. These results mean that nine out of 10 of our streams are rated as having substantial pollution likely (5.76-6.5); very substantial pollution likely (6.51-7.25); and severe pollution likely (7.26-10).

Future benthic sampling will help to better understand the results seen in 2014 and assist water management and stewardship staff to target future water quality sampling and stewardship projects in areas with a poor FBI.

Stream Name	FBI score	FBI Index
Fleming Creek	6.629508	Fairly Poor
Thames Trib	7.166113	Poor
Pain Drain	7.625323	Very Poor
McGregor Creek	6.134831	Fairly Poor
Saddington Drain	6.953795	Poor
Hendry Drain	5.28808	Fair
McLean Drain	7.71012	Very Poor
Big Creek	6.13738	Fairly Poor
Roe Drain	7.5276	Very Poor
Bennet Drain	5.795527	Fairly Poor

Conservation Scholarships and Awards

The LTVCA continued to support a variety of local scholarships and awards including a 27-year commitment to the Ridgetown Campus of the University of Guelph's environmental program. An award of \$500 for **Academic Proficiency** in the **Environmental Management** diploma program is given to the student with the highest academic standing. Craig Curragh was presented the award by LTVCA General Manager Don Pearson. **The Greening Partnership Environmental Award** applauds environmental achievements in Chatham-Kent. This year's recipients were Jason Segren and Chris Stewart (landowners), Scribendi (business) and Chatham Kent Secondary School - Environment Club.

Elgin Clean Water Project

The Elgin Clean Water Project (ECWP) is a cooperative program between the Catfish Creek, Kettle Creek, Long Point Region and Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authorities. ECWP assists landowners with projects, which improve and protect water quality in Elgin County. Landowners undertake stewardship practices to benefit the entire County and beyond. Three landowners from the LTVCA watershed received funding for four projects through the ECWP.



Thames, Sydenham and Region Source Protection Region

Drinking Water Source Protection

The purpose of the provincial Clean Water Act (CWA) (2006) is to protect existing and future sources of drinking water. Protecting water at the source - municipal wells and water intakes - is the first barrier in a multi-barrier approach to providing a safe, clean supply of water. The Act is part of the government's commitment to protecting and enhancing human health and the environment, while implementing the Walkerton Inquiry recommendations.



Photo by Eileen Lewington

The Upper Thames River, Lower Thames Valley and St. Clair Region Conservation Authorities partnered together to form the Thames, Sydenham and Region Source Protection Region and are working with municipalities, stakeholders and the public to develop a Source Protection Plan to protect drinking water, while taking into account the needs of our communities. The Source Protection Committee is appointed under the Clean Water Act, 2006, representing municipal, business, general public and interest group sectors in the region. The Committee is responsible for guiding the development of the Source Protection Plan.

Highlights of the Year

Two years ago, the Source Protection Authority submitted the Proposed Source Protection Plan to the Minister of Environment for approval. Since that time, the Source Protection Committee and staff updated technical work in the Assessment Reports and amended the Source Protection Plan to reflect the additional technical work. Public open houses were held in the areas affected by updates in September 2014 (Wheatley).

The Updated Assessment Reports along with the Amended Proposed Source Protection Plan were provided for public consultation at each of the Conservation Authority offices in January 2015. The Source Protection Committee will submit the updated Assessment Report to the Source Protection Authority with any comments received during the consultation; after which the Updated Assessment Reports will be submitted to the Minister.

It is anticipated that a Source Protection Plan for the Thames-Sydenham and Region will be approved in 2015.

Providing Opportunities to Enjoy, Learn & Respect

Conservation Lands

The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority has protected environmentally sensitive lands, wetlands, culturally unique features and significant biological, ecological, and scenic qualities through its conservation lands program. Nearly 690 ha of conservation lands have been preserved at 25 locations for public use in the watershed and region. The LTVCA promotes its objectives through recreational and educational opportunities in the Conservation Areas - places to actively experience the natural world and increase environmental awareness through interpretive signage and special events.

Russ Dysarz and David Little - Western and Eastern District Supervisors respectively, and Bruce Clark - Construction and Maintenance Technician, are responsible for the maintenance of these sites. The LTVCA's Staff Safety Committee tours the conservation lands regularly to assess the properties' safety for public use. Additionally, it is the Conservation Authority's policy, to ensure conservation area facilities and programs are as accessible for everyone's enjoyment.

Conservation Area development and maintenance of facilities is enhanced by annual donations of money and volunteer time from local individuals, companies, conservation clubs and organizations. The LTVCA is grateful to all donors.

This year witnessed many improvements to our conservation areas. New pay and display machines at C.M. Wilson and Longwoods Road Conservation Area entrances were installed to improve efficient collection of fees and were generally accepted by park users.

In the western half of the watershed, **Big "O"** received a new kiosk sign and birders' log book. **Merlin** also saw a kiosk sign, benches and a trail completed. **Rowson's Tilbury West's** fence line was replaced and lots of help came from a local 'Friends of' group and Stewardship Rangers to mulch trails, paint signs and install benches. At **Rondeau Bay Marshes**, the parking lot was extended with a new sign. **C.M. Wilson** saw a new roof for the rental home, washrooms painted and a new hydro line to the campground installed. With 13,841 campers and day users, this area provides a unique escape to nature right in Chatham-Kent's back yard! At **McGeachy Pond**, a new pathway was completed by the South Kent Trails group, along with several new benches along the way.

In the eastern conservation areas **Longwoods Road** welcomed nearly 17,000 visitors to its beautiful, natural surroundings and Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum. Construction of the interpretive kiosk building for the Carey Carolinian Arboretum and Trail neared completion with the installation of stained glass windows and wheelchair ramps. Ska-Nah-Doht Village underwent major renovations including the removal of bark and wire from a longhouse, construction on the palisade, and signage removal. The dismantling of the lookout tower at **E.M. Warwick** improved safety and bridge repairs were completed. This day use area and camp equipped with cabins and a mess hall, provided unique lakeside facilities for over 1,744 people. At **Sharon Creek**, the outdoor amphitheatre was fixed and a volunteer event to cut the sumac in the tallgrass prairie was held for next year's prescribed burn. Trees were planted at the **Mosa Forest** in preparation for the annual memorial forest service. Over 2,500 people, who preferred the solitude of the Thames River location, enjoyed camping at **Big Bend**.



Conservation Education

The Conservation Education program provides Ontario Curriculum based, conservation area elementary and secondary field trip and in-class programs to students and the community. Staff work with stewardship partners, service clubs, post-secondary schools, volunteers and the public to foster an understanding and appreciation of our renewable natural resources. Jerry DeZwart is the Conservation Education Technician.

In the Community

Scout and Guide groups achieve badges while enjoying weekend camp experiences! Over 50 outdoor programs range from geocaching to bird watching. Workshops for Brownies, Cubs, Guides, Scouts, Pathfinders and Venturers attracted 160 youth.

Concerned community groups are a great benefit to our forests. The Strathroy Horticultural Society and local secondary schools helped out our native plants and forests at a **Carolinian Native Garden Planting Event** at Longwoods Road Conservation Area's Carey Carolinian Arboretum and Trail. A **Planting Native Plants Presentation** held at Brenair Farms highlighted ecological threats posed by non-native species and the benefits of native garden alternatives.



Pre-school, elementary, secondary and post-secondary programs are offered year-round to students at Longwoods Road Conservation Area.

School Programs

School field trips to conservation areas make ideal outdoor classroom experiences. Students and teachers remark on the great benefit from 'beyond the blackboard' learning opportunities like the 26 programs offered at Longwoods Road and C.M. Wilson Conservation Areas. Environmental studies reached 1,333 students and 249 adult supervisors at Longwoods Road over the past year. The Ontario Trails Council is recognized for its support of 13 programs offered to 216 of these students.

Classroom programs are also provided to those schools challenged by bussing costs. A popular program is the grade 2 - *River and Creek Safety Program*, which was taught to 286 children. The LTVCA works with area service clubs to provide water safety education to those most vulnerable to the dangers of seasonal melt waters. The Delaware Lions and Lioness Clubs, Royal Canadian Legion Branches 598 and 251, Glencoe District Lions Club, Rodney Lions Club, and Optimist Club of West Lorne are greatly appreciated for funding the program over 13 years.

The following classroom programs are designed to help students visualize and internalize challenges facing their natural world and encourage students to respect and offer the environment a helping hand. *The Protecting Our Drinking Water Program* was completed this year with 113 grade 8 and 11 students participating, thanks to funding from an RBC Blue Water grant. *The Biodiversity and You! Program* also concluded, having instilled the importance of lifeform diversity to 49 grade 6 students.

Chatham-Kent & Lambton Childrens' Water Festival

This free, three day autumn event, geared to Ontario curriculum guidelines regarding water use and stewardship, was resumed in 2014 after a one-year hiatus in 2013. A total of 653 grades 4 and 5 students and 130 teachers/parent volunteers from 33 schools were able to attend. Unfortunately, attendance was impacted by two days of bus cancellations due to severe morning fog. LTVCA staff also assisted at two other festivals - the Elgin - St. Thomas Children's Water Festival held in St. Thomas in May and the Carolinian Forest Festival in September, held at Catfish Creek CA's Springwater Conservation Area.

Ska-Nah-Doht Village & Museum



OUR MISSION

Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum continues to be a community leader, to educate about the past, collect and preserve local history, and faithfully interpret the Haudenosaunee - People of the Longhouse.

OUR VISION

Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum is an interactive museum that engages the public in the preservation and presentation of the past through experiences on-site and in the community.

Village Curator - Karen Mattila managed the \$244,806 Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum budget. Rose Nicholas - Village Education Technician conducted programs, events and directed inventory for the Turtle Trail Gift Shop. The Curator and Advisory committee members successfully defended the museum's right to remain in the Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG) program by creating new Vision and Mission Statements, Values and a Five Year Strategic Plan. We graciously acknowledge the \$22,992 in financial support from the Ministry of Culture through CMOG.

Summer Student Grants

We received three grants with one position each; Young Canada Works in Heritage (YCW), Canada Summer Jobs and Summer Experience Program. The students worked together promoting the LTVCA and Longwoods' events within the community. Thanks to LTVC Foundation for their financial support of the students.



MP Bev Shipley visits with two of our summer students at the Annual Longwoods Volunteer Picnic in July.

Education Programs

As part of its Mission to educate about the past, Ska-Nah-Doht's education programs attracted 3,197 students and 642 adult supervisors. In addition, 296 public tour and workshop participants enjoyed the interactive museum.

Turtle Trail Gift Shop Has Best Year!

Schools play a central role in creating larger sales for the Turtle Trail Gift Shop. June is the busiest time of the year and the most financially successful month with 34% of the total annual sales of \$13,800. Participating in community events contributed as well, including Western and Fanshawe Pow Wow, Canada Day and London's largest festival - "Sunfest". The Ska-Nah-Doht Building Fund profited with \$1,980 in sales generated at these events.

Fall Filming Fetches \$2,000



Two film crews worked on historical pieces at Ska-Nah-Doht. In October, one shoot recreated the Pontiac Rebellion of the 1700's. Later, the French School Board created YouTube vignettes to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Champlain landing in the New World. With 63 hectares, we are an adaptable location!

Partnering with the Local Community

Community Relations

Communication efforts enhance awareness and understanding of the goals and programs of the LTVCA for our target audiences, enabling them to support and enjoy our facilities and services. Through accurate, consistent and clear messaging, staff expand the range of the target audiences whenever possible. Bonnie Carey - Community Relations Coordinator is assisted by Agnes Vriends - Clerk - Secretary on many communications projects.

Community Relations activities inform our primary audiences - LTVCA Board and Committee members, Councillors and staff from member municipalities, Government agencies, and our own staff about the Conservation Authority's programs and services. Watershed residents, media, users of LTVCA facilities and services, partners including the LTVCA Foundation, and potential partners, are additional vital audiences.

Through regular updates of our social media, and production of literature, our goals and objectives are broadcast across the watershed. Special events and tours are hosted

throughout the watershed. Staff initiate and assist with other local environmental projects such as children's festivals, and design and arrange and create displays for fairs and conferences.

Fostering partnerships and collaboration with organizations, volunteers and other stakeholders are priority, and help to further the conservation of our watershed resources. Meeting facilitation, fund-raising with the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Foundation, supervising employment programs, and contributing on conservation committees and working groups, are additional activities which help the LTVCA meet its objectives.

As well, communications staff work on many projects for the Thames, Sydenham and Region Source Protection Region, including advertising, and organizing and supporting meetings as per the Clean Water Act.

Highlights of the Year

It was a busy year with lots of projects and activities, beginning with the writing of the LTVCA's annual report and creating a presentation for the Annual General Meeting. An E-bulletin was also produced. The decision was made to have our website redesigned as a new content management site which entailed working closely with an Information Technologist for picture / text selection and layout. The website will be 'live' in the spring of 2015. Throughout the spring and fall, assistance was provided in the delivery of conservation education programs, including lending a hand to two neighbouring Conservation Authority's children's festivals. Over the summer months, staff assisted with the planning of a west end watershed bus tour for our Directors, where projects and properties were toured in August. The annual Longwoods volunteer picnic was also held. In the fall, time was spent preparing for and operating the Chatham-Kent and Lambton Children's Water Festival. As well, four memorial forest dedication services were planned and held across the watershed. At year-end, preparations for public consultation meetings for the Source Water Protection Program were undertaken and new conservation area advertisements for county tourist organizations were designed. Throughout the year, daily updates to our website and Facebook pages were made, media releases were issued, special conservation area events were planned, reports were prepared for our Board of Directors' meetings and staff publications were reviewed.



The annual Chatham-Kent and Lambton Children's Water Festival was held at the C.M. Wilson Conservation Area in October.



The August 28 Watershed West bus tour showcased properties and projects to LTVCA Directors and guests.

Lower Thames Valley Conservation Foundation

Highlights of the Year



The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Foundation works in partnership with the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority, to raise funds towards the wise management of our renewable natural resources. Since 1995, the Foundation has raised over \$675,000 for natural and cultural heritage conservation. Thousands of dollars were raised throughout the year for conservation projects.

The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Foundation assists volunteer organizations with their fund raising efforts and manages the Sharon Creek Trust Fund, initiated by the Friends of Sharon Creek. The Foundation supports special projects and events like the annual Moonlight Winter Family Hike, the Carey Carolinian Arboretum and Trail and the William Erickson Bursary. Through the Foundation's Memorial Forest Program, the Conservation Authority has planted thousands of trees across the lower Thames region. The Foundation submits funding applications to

Carey Carolinian Arboretum & Trail

Facilitated through the Foundation, a \$26,000 gift in 2008 from Dr. Lewis Carey, was used the following year by the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority for an educational "Carey Carolinian Arboretum and Trail" project at Longwoods Road Conservation Area. Dr. Carey passed away in November of 2009. Large stock Carolinian trees were planted and interpretive signage installed. An official opening and recognition ceremony was held in 2010.

The final phase of this project began in 2012, with the start of the Carolinian information kiosk construction. The kiosk now nears completion with stained glass windows, exterior panelling and wheelchair ramps for accessibility. Four surrounding native gardens were planted in June. The Carolinian Canada information panels will be created, along with donor recognition panels and exhibited in the kiosk.

Both the Conservation Foundation and Conservation Authority realize this project as an educational tool. Dr. Carey's wish to reflect the connection between First Nations peoples and the Carolinian forest came to fruition, as Longwoods highlights both native and natural history.

corporations, government agencies, service clubs and other philanthropic organizations to undertake projects and programs, which assist the LTVCA and watershed region.

The Conservation Foundation is a not-for-profit, federally registered charity, governed by a Board of Directors. Tax receipts are issued for all donations.

The Foundation helped fund and support several Conservation Authority and watershed initiatives:

- *Tastes of Fall Event at Ska-Nah-Doht Village*
- *Nearly 400 memorial trees from 2013*
- *13 large stock trees for memorial forest dedication services*
- *Support for student grants*
- *Tallgrass Prairie Seed for Sharon Creek Tallgrass Prairie*
- *Volunteers for Moonlight Winter Family Hike event, 4 memorial forest dedication services and maintenance of the Sharon Creek Tallgrass Prairie*



Nearly 1,000 family and friends of loved ones attended the McKinlay Woodlands Memorial Forest Dedication Service held in September at C.M. Wilson Conservation Area - one of four annual services.

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