



St. Clair Region Conservation Authority Meeting Highlights – November 8, 2018

Below is a list of highlights from the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) board meeting held in November. For details, please refer to the entire meeting package which can be found at www.scrca.on.ca/about-us/board-meeting-packages.

Environmental Commissioner's Visit: On October 5th, Ontario's Environmental Commissioner Dianne Saxe met with SCRCA Chair Steve Arnold and staff to gain a better understanding of local environmental issues, challenges and successes in the St. Clair region. Staff toured the Commissioner to local shoreline projects and conservation areas including Point Edward and the Wawanosh Wetlands. Discussions surrounded agricultural runoff and drainage, invasive species and Great Lakes water quality. The Commissioner was very engaged in the tour and complimentary of the work the SCRCA was doing in the region.

SCRCA Bylaws: With the passage of the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act in 2017, Conservation Authorities were legislated to update their Authority Bylaws by December 2018. The first reading of the SCRCA's updated Bylaws occurred at the September 2018 meeting of the Board of Directors. Comments were incorporated into a revised draft that was approved and adopted by the SCRCA Board of Directors at the November meeting.

Campgrounds: Authority campgrounds closed after the Thanksgiving long weekend ending another successful camping season for the SCRCA. The three campgrounds were busy in 2018 with a \$1.2 M gross revenue reported to the end of September. Revenue increases were observed for seasonal camping (up 2%), overnight camping (up 11%) and pump-outs (up 27%).

Watershed Conditions: Dry conditions throughout the first part of September were followed by several small storm events the last week leading to increased water levels in local rivers. Average precipitation was below normal throughout the region except for Strathroy where above average rainfall was observed.

Lake Levels: September 2018 lake level data indicates a slight increase in overall monthly levels compared to last year for the Great Lakes. A 1 cm increase was recorded for Lake Huron. Current levels remain above the 10 year average as well as above the all-time average (100 years).

Flood Forecasting Innovation Project: In partnership with Lambton College, SCRCA staff continue to advance the Flood Forecasting Innovation Project that will improve local flood forecasting by providing staff with reliable flood condition data in areas void of monitoring equipment. Recent highlights include:

- the installation of a monitoring camera by the Wallaceburg stream gauge. The camera will capture water levels and ice conditions in this stretch of the Sydenham River.
- testing of the mobile rain gauge at the SCRCA administration building. The mobile rain gauge will allow staff to monitor precipitation across the watershed in areas that do not have rain gauges installed.

Healthy Watersheds Program: A number of events were held in September and October as part of the Healthy Watershed Program. These included:

- Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, Ipperwash Beach – Twenty volunteers participated and picked-up garbage left strewn along this popular beach area.
- TD Tree Days in Strathroy, Forest and Sarnia – Between the three events, over 120 people planted 340 trees!
- Forest Fall Fair – An annual tradition, staff attended the fair to share information on agricultural best management practices, conservation areas and local water quality.
- Tailgate Talk – An informal talk that attracted 25 people. Six farmers shared their experiences with cover crops and how the practice has improved soil health and stability at their farms in addition to being financially beneficial.

Phosphorus Management Plan: Environment and Climate Change Canada has provided funding to the SCRCA to develop a management plan that will (with the assistance and expertise of local stakeholders) chart a path for phosphorus management, monitoring and reduction in the Sydenham River watershed. A stakeholder engagement meeting is being planned for late November.

North Sydenham Mussel Inventories: Mussel monitoring conducted by SCRCA staff throughout the Sydenham watershed plays an important role in the overall research and knowledge of freshwater mussels in Ontario. Results from the 58 surveys completed in the north Sydenham River revealed the presence of 22 different mussel species, six of which were Species at Risk (SAR). In total 7945 live mussels and 7825 dead mussels were recorded.

Seed Collection Program: Once again, the SCRCA seed collection program was supported through a generous donation from Enbridge. As a result, staff along with local volunteers collected 2,600 litres of local tree seed that was sent to the nursery where the majority of our deciduous trees are purchased. This program ensures that trees planted in the St. Clair region are genetically indigenous and adapted to the local climate, soils, etc.

For more information, contact:
 Brian McDougall, General Manager
 519-245-3710 ext. 236
 bmcdougall@scrca.on.ca



St. Clair Region Conservation Authority Meeting Highlights – December 13, 2018

Below is a list of highlights from the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) board meeting held in December. For details, please refer to the entire meeting package which can be found at www.scrca.on.ca/about-us/board-meeting-packages.

Conservation Lands Update: Conservation Area staff have been busy completing fall maintenance work and projects. A number of boardwalks at local conservation areas have been upgraded including 14 at the Strathroy Conservation Area thanks to a \$2,500 donation by Bonduelle Strathroy. Approximately 75 trees have been planted as part of the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation memorial forest program and dead and dangerous trees have been removed along trails, roadways and in day use areas.

Watershed Conditions: Reasonably wet conditions throughout the first part of November were followed by several minor storm events resulting in a Flood Outlook Bulletin (Nov. 1st), a Flood Watch (Nov. 2nd) and a Flood Watch Update on November 6th. River levels stabilized in the middle of the month due to the accumulation of snow rather than rain. Increased temperatures resulted in snow melt and increased water levels towards the end of November. The forecast for December is suggesting below average temperatures at the end of the month with above average precipitation in the form of snow.

Lake Levels: October Lake Huron lake level data indicates a slight increase (3 cm) in monthly levels compared to 2017. Similar trends are reported for Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie. Currently lake levels remain substantially above the 10 year average as well as above the all-time average (100 years).

Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund: The SCRCA has submitted an application to the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund administered by the Government of Canada. The fund supports large-scale infrastructure projects to help communities better manage the risks of disasters triggered by natural hazards. The application prepared by staff requests \$20,000,000 in funding to establish shoreline protection for select locations along Lake Huron and the St. Clair River within the City of Sarnia and Township of St. Clair. The application has been screened and selected for advancement and further consideration by the federal government.

Angus Tree Seed Plant: The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry held a series of workshops at the Angus Tree Seed Plant the week of November 26th. With the exit of the government from tree seed management, the purpose of the workshops were to provide service providers with an updated overview of their organization, what services they will be able to provide in the future and future market opportunities in Ontario. SCRCA staff are currently looking into local opportunities for tree seed storage, bank establishment and future tree seed supply options.

Sydenham River Phosphorus Management Plan: Environment and Climate Change Canada has provided funding to the SCRCA to develop a management plan that will (with the assistance and expertise of local stakeholders) chart a path for phosphorus management, monitoring and reduction in the Sydenham River watershed. On November 27th, a stakeholder engagement meeting was held that allowed for networking opportunities, an introduction to the project and the soliciting of participants to take part in specialized working groups. Many positive reviews were received by the 65 stakeholders who attended the day.

St. Clair River Area of Concern: The Canadian Remedial Action Plan Implementation Committee announced in November that a “Not Impaired” status has been granted for three Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) in the St. Clair River Area of Concern – *Restrictions on Dredging Activities, Beach Closings and Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproduction Problems*. Comprehensive surveys and monitoring confirmed that restoration targets have been successfully achieved. The “Not Impaired” designation of these BUIs represents significant progress towards the restoration of the St. Clair River. An event celebrating this milestone will be organized in early 2019.

For more information, contact:
Brian McDougall, General Manager
519-245-3710 ext. 236
bmcDougall@scrca.on.ca