



St. Clair Region Conservation Authority Meeting Highlights – June 27, 2024

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

2024 Project Tour: Prior to the June board meeting, Directors participated in a local project tour that highlighted many of the SCRCA's services and programs in the St. Clair Township area. Tour highlights included stops at the W. Darcy McKeough Floodway and Dam and Greenhill Gardens, a newly acquired property by the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation. Project tours provide an informal opportunity for the board to ask questions directly to staff while seeing firsthand, the work the Authority does to fulfill its mandate. Tours are expected to occur bi-annually, with the next one tentatively scheduled for June 2026.

Watershed Conditions: The current flood threat in the St. Clair Region is low to moderate although summer thunderstorms have the potential to raise the flood threat and lead to flash flooding. Regional precipitation amounts have been above average this spring. Water level projections for Lake Michigan-Huron and Lake St. Clair suggest levels will remain above average, with seasonal declines occurring in August and June, respectively.

Planning and Regulations Activity: Between March 1st and May 31st, 2024, staff issued 114 permits and responded to 137 inquiries under O. Reg 171/06 – Development, Interference of Wetlands, and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses (pre-April 1, 2024) and O. Reg. 41/24 – Prohibited Activities and Exemptions (effective April 1, 2024). Additionally, 20 permits were issued during the same timeframe under the *Drainage Act* and Section 28 Regulations Team (DART) protocol. Planning activity between March 1st and May 31st, 2024, included the review and comment on 80 municipal plan input and review files, 9 environmental assessments, and 20 legal inquiries.

2024 Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race: Despite the soggy conditions, the 2024 Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race was successfully held on Sunday, April 28th, 2024. Almost 70 paddlers participated in the race that features 11 different race classes and three different race lengths. The race serves as a fundraiser for the SCRCA's Conservation Education program and raised \$2,181 through registration fees, donations, and t-shirt sales, after accounting for event expenses. The top fundraiser award was presented to Emery Huszka and Pat Brown for their fundraising efforts.

Conservation Education Program Update: Interest in the SCRCA's Conservation Education programs continue to be in high demand with staff currently delivering Spring field trips and schoolyard programs. Approximately 3,200 students and teachers from 35 different watershed schools will participate in field trips this spring in addition to 450

students, from 5 watershed schools participating in schoolyard programming. In addition, staff were invited to attend and present at the Ontario Association of Geography and Environmental Educators (OAGEE) Conference and bus tour held in Sarnia-Lambton on May 2nd and 3rd. During the bus tour, conference attendees visited the Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area in Petrolia to learn about Conservation Authorities and the education programs available to secondary level students.

2024 Conservation Scholarships: At the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation's June meeting, the Board of Directors approved the recommendations for the 2024 Conservation Scholarship award winners. The scholarship program supports high school students who are pursuing post-secondary studies in an environmental field. The following recipients will be presented with their awards over the coming weeks:

A.W. Campbell Memorial Scholarship (\$1,000):

Lily Demaiter, Lambton-Kent Composite School, Dresden

Tony Stranak Conservation Scholarship (\$500):

Gracie Hobbs, Lambton Central Collegiate and Vocational Institute, Petrolia

Mary Jo Arnold Conservation Scholarship (\$500):

Makenna Zavitz, Northern Collegiate Institute and Vocational School, Sarnia

Conservation Agriculture Lands: The SCRCA owns approximately 1,195 acres of agricultural land throughout the watershed which are rented/leased on five-year terms. The income generated helps to offset salary costs and other budget items. After the last tendering process, a task-team consisting of Board Members and staff was established to review the current Agricultural Lease Agreement and discuss opportunities for achieving a balance between revenue production and sound environmental management on these lands. Based on recent discussions, staff will be focusing on integrating appropriate best management practices to improve land management on these properties. This will include developing an agricultural land strategy, new lease agreement and tender package, an internal land category inventory for management, and a priority list for improvements.

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