



## St. Clair Region Conservation Authority Meeting Highlights – December 10, 2020

Below is a list of highlights from the 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](http://www.scrca.on.ca/about-us/board-meeting-packages).

**Conservation Areas and 2020 Camping Season:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, camping at the SCRCA's three regional campgrounds was delayed. Seasonal camping opened June 5<sup>th</sup> and transient camping opened June 29<sup>th</sup> with limited site availability to accommodate social distancing. Overall camping revenue was down 23.8% (\$290,646). Despite challenges associated with the pandemic, a number of upgrades were completed in 2020 including new boardwalk installations at the Strathroy Conservation Area (CA) and Coldstream CA, the construction of a "WIFI café" at Warwick CA and new viewing and fishing docks at A.W. Campbell CA and Wawanosh Wetlands CA, among others.

**Flood Threat:** The flood threat in the St. Clair Region watershed is low due to drops in water levels on the Great Lakes, Lake St. Clair and in Wallaceburg. Regional precipitation amounts are near normal averages for 6- and 12-month periods with the last 3 month period below normal.

**Lake Levels:** October water levels recorded for Lake Huron, Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie were a few centimetres below levels recorded in October 2019. All lakes were below their October 1986 record levels. Levels are expected to continue decreasing by 5-10 cm in November. Forecasts for Lake Huron and Lake St. Clair show that levels may reach or exceed record-highs in January through to April.

**Shoreline Projects:** The SCRCA continues to work with contractors and local municipalities to complete shoreline protection projects along the Lake Huron shoreline.

- **Brights Grove, Kenwick Street to Helen Avenue – Phase 2** – Work continues to repair 17 deficiencies identified in May at the toe of the shoreline protection. The contractor is currently exploring methods to complete the repairs.
- **Brights Grove, Kenwick Street to Helen Avenue – Phase 3** – A Request for Pre-Qualification (RFPQ) was initiated on November 6, 2020. Twelve submissions were received, and an evaluation team is currently reviewing the applications. The tender process will begin in December 2020, with shoreline work expected to commence January 2021.
- **Brights Grove, Old Lakeshore Road East** – All shoreline work was completed on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The City of Sarnia has requested for a secondary capstone placement along the entire length of the project.

**Biology 2020 Monitoring and Research Highlights:** Despite challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the SCRCA Biology team successfully completed all research and monitoring fieldwork scheduled for the 2020 season. Project highlights include:

- **Turtle Head-starting Program** – A total of 799 eggs were collected from turtle nests at risk of predation and destruction in the St. Clair Region and incubated at Salthaven Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. An incredible 682 healthy hatchlings were released back into the wild including the endangered Eastern Spiny Softshell turtle.
- **Mussel Monitoring** – Mussel monitoring along a 5 km stretch of the Sydenham River resulted in the detection of 1,688 live mussels including seven Species at Risk.
- **Fish Monitoring** – Fish monitoring conducted at 10 sites along the Sydenham River resulted in the collection, identification and release of 3,611 fish. Forty different species were identified including 233 invasive Round Goby.

**Tree Planting Program:** Approximately 56,600 trees were planted throughout the St. Clair Region as part of the SCRCA tree seedling afforestation program. The majority of trees were planted by SCRCA crews totalling 50,340 trees on 29 individual properties. Staff are currently working on the 2021 tree program by contacting landowners, performing site visits and formulating tree planting plans.

**Seed Collection Program:** SCRCA staff collected more than 2,500 litres of tree seed as part of its annual tree seed collection program. The majority of tree seed collected were oaks, hickories, walnut, and maple. The 2020 seeds collected will be seedling trees available for planting in 2022 and 2023.

**Watershed Interpreters Network (WIN) Award:** Through the efforts of the Conservation Education team, the SCRCA was the recipient of the 2020 WIN Award for Innovation for the highly successful virtual field trips developed in response to spring school closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**2021 Budget:** The 2021 Authority budget was approved at \$9,739,780. The General Levy (matching and non-matching) of \$1,179,567 accounts for 12% of the total budget. The remainder of the funds come from fundraising, government grants and self-generated funds such as camping fees, and fees for services (e.g., tree planting, permits, natural heritage planning, education programs, etc.).

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