



St. Clair Region Conservation Authority Meeting Highlights – April 17, 2025

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

Lambton Cattlemen's Association – Community Pasture Project: In September 2024, Conservation Authorities were alerted to a potential partnership opportunity between the Beef Farmers of Ontario that would see farmers rent conservation-owned land for cattle grazing. Members of the Lambton Cattlemen's Association attended the meeting to provide the Board of Directors with an overview of the community pasture program and potential partnership with the SCRCA. Community pastures are pasturelands managed by a board of directors and a pasture manager. The land is provided to different producers who may need the land as grazing land becomes scarcer in Ontario. Staff have identified three properties (185 acres) that may suit this initiative. The Board directed staff to continue discussions with the Lambton Cattlemen's Association and bring back a proposed agreement.

Watershed Conditions: Regional precipitation amounts are close to normal for the past 12-month period. Water levels on the surrounding Great Lakes are close to average for this time of year, with all lakes experiencing a decline from February into early March. With lower water levels on Lakes Huron and St. Clair and a metre of freeboard in Wallaceburg, the flood threat in the St. Clair Region watershed is currently low.

Planning and Regulations Activity: Between February 1st and February 28th, 2025, staff issued 9 permits and responded to 41 inquiries under O. Reg 41/24 – Prohibited Activities, Exemptions, and Permits. Additionally, 1 permit was issued during the same timeframe under the *Drainage Act* and Section 28 Regulations Team (DART) protocol. Planning activity between February 1st and February 28th, 2025, included the review and comment on 34 municipal plan input and review files, 2 environmental assessment, and 3 legal inquiries.

St. Clair River Area of Concern – Management of Contaminated Sediment: The remediation of three areas of contaminated sediment in the St. Clair River, which began in November 2024, was successfully completed in March 2025. This project, carried out by a contractor hired by Dow Canada, involved the application of an erosion-resistant cover. While the SCRCA was not involved in the implementation phase of this project, its completion marks significant progress towards addressing two remaining Beneficial Use Impairments: BUI #1 (Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption) and BUI #6 (Degradation of Benthos).

2025 Maple Syrup Festival: Between 400 and 500 people visited the A.W. Campbell Conservation Area for the 2025 Maple Syrup Festival on March 15th. Held in partnership with the Brooke-Alvinston Firefighters Association annual pancake breakfast, visitors were treated to demonstrations of historical maple syrup production, wagon rides, maple taffy, and hot chocolate. Building upon the success of the 2024 event, the 2025 festival once again featured local vendors and environmental groups along with a shuttle to and from the Conservation Area. The event was generously sponsored by Bluewater Power, the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation, and the Optimist Club of Alvinston Districts. Additionally, approximately 260 students visited the A.W. Campbell Conservation Area to participate in the Sweet Maple Syrup field trip between March 18th and 21st, 2025.

Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race: The Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race has been an annual tradition for 50 years. Serving as a fundraiser for Conservation Education, the race features 11 different race classes and three different race lengths along the Sydenham River. In early January, staff held a meeting to discuss the 2025 race tentatively scheduled for April 27th. It was during this meeting that several concerns and challenges were brought forward. Staff ultimately decided not to move forward with the 2025 race to reassess a number of factors that have influenced the past success of the race and the future success of holding the race.

Conservation Education Program Update: Interest in the SCRCA's Conservation Education programs continue to be in high demand. Recent activities include:

- **Field Trips:** The SCRCA Education team is currently booking spring field trips. Approximately 2,100 students are expected to visit from over 23 different watershed schools. Spaces remain available with teachers inquiring about field trips daily.
- **Nature in Your Neighbourhood:** Spring schoolyard programs are currently being booked with approximately 150 students expected to participate. It is anticipated that additional schools will book schoolyard programs in May and June.
- **Spring Water Awareness Program:** Sponsored by Plains Midstream Canada, approximately 1,000 students at 9 schools will participate in activities that will teach them to stay safe in the springtime by keeping away from the edge of water.
- **Future Farmers Program:** Funded through the Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative, staff are currently halfway through delivering the 5-day Future Farmers program. The program has reached 225 students and consists of three days of in-class instruction, a field trip to two farms, and a final day at the Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area.

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