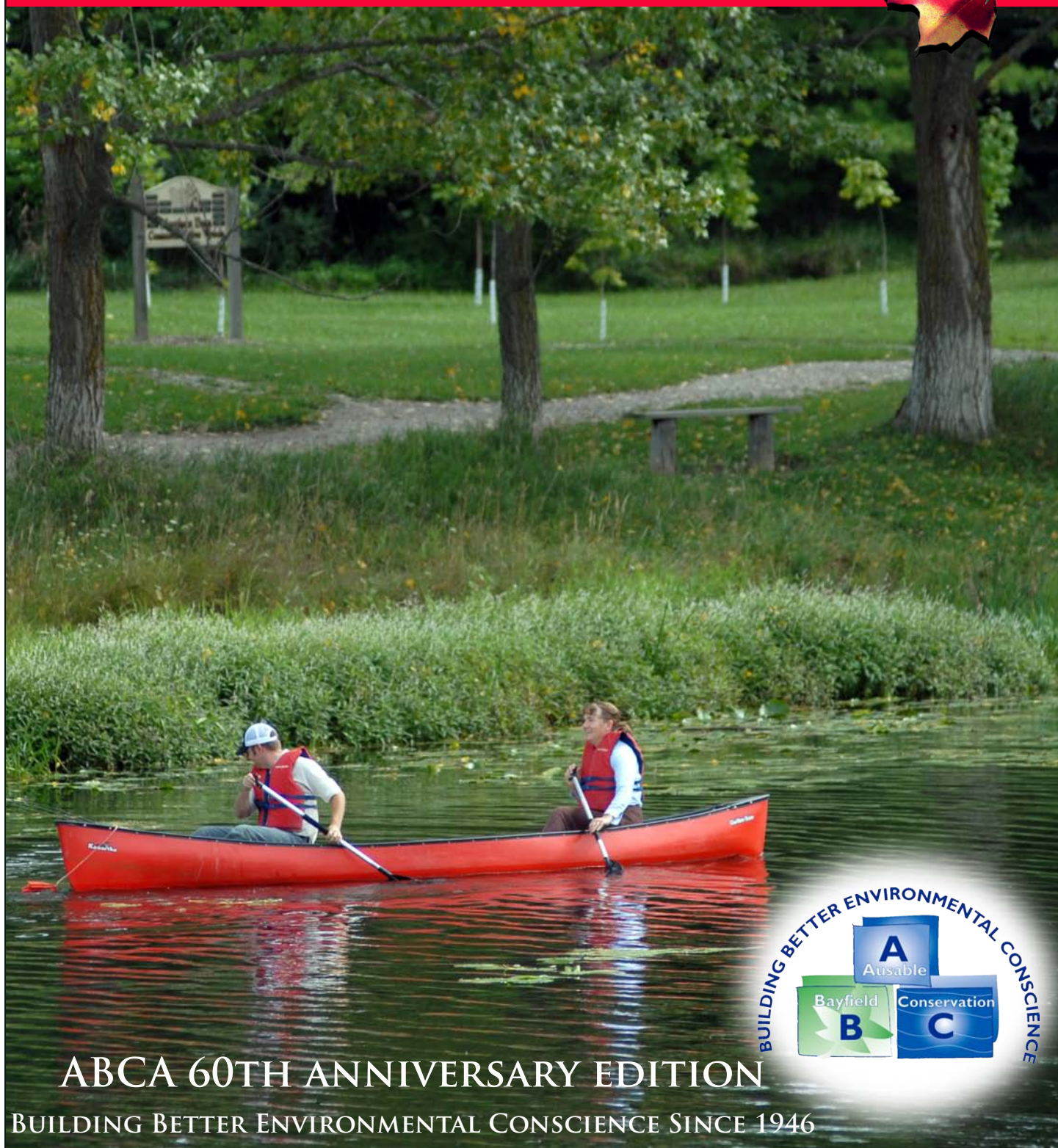


AUSABLE BAYFIELD CONSERVATION AUTHORITY 2006 ANNUAL REPORT



ABCA 60TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

BUILDING BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIENCE SINCE 1946

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Corporate Services	
Message from the Chair	Page 2
Board of Directors Message	Page 3
General Manager's Report	Page 4
ABCA Staff Report	Page 5-6
Conservation Education	Page 7
Communications	Page 8
Water Management	
Flooding Report	Page 9
Monitoring Water Levels and Steam Flows	Pages 10-11
Water and Erosion Control	Pages 11-12
Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Mapping Report	Pages 13-14
Watershed Management	
Water and Planning	Pages 14-15
Sinkhole Investigation Study	Page 15
Regulations (Ontario Regulation 147/06: Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines & Watercourse Regulation)	Page 16
Groundwater Monitoring and Studies	Page 17
Source Water Protection	
Drinking Water Source Protection Planning	Page 18
Healthy Watersheds	
Healthy Watersheds, Partnerships for Water Quality Enhancement	Page 19
Watershed Report Card	Page 20
Community Groups	Page 21
Ausable River Recovery Strategy	Pages 22-23
Conservation Land Management	
Conservation Land Management	Page 24
Conservation Area Development	Page 25
Forest Health Update, Forestry	Pages 25-26
Private Land Stewardship	Page 26
Watershed Stewardship	
Tree Planting Program Report	Page 27
Conservationist of the Year, International Study Visit to ABCA	Page 28
2006 Performance Summary/Recap of ABCA 60th Anniversary Year	Page 29
ABCA 60th Anniversary History Column Series	Pages 30-41
Financial Summary	
Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation	Page 42
	Pages 43-44

Board, municipalities, staff and partners work together

Message from the Chair,
Bill Weber

It is my pleasure to represent Lambton Shores and serve as the Chairman of the Board of Directors for the ABCA.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors carefully balances a commitment to watershed stewardship with strong representation of the 12 member municipalities, to ensure conservation is accomplished in a fiscally responsible and sustainable way.

The member municipalities of the ABCA have benefited greatly over the years as a result of the foresight of the municipal representatives in the past and the dedicated staff who implement the watershed stewardship mandate.

The Board of Directors has worked well and cooperatively together and I am honoured to be part of such an effective and committed group of people.

The ABCA is only able to achieve its watershed goals through strong partnerships with municipalities, government departments, non-governmental organizations, landowners and others. It continues a culture of success thanks to the positive staff members who are dedicated to the vision and mission of this organization.

This Conservation Authority completed many beneficial projects in 2006, and carried on a tradition of conservation that had started sixty years before.

Activities were held throughout the ABCA's 60th Anniversary year to celebrate the many watershed accomplishments of individual landowners, community groups, schools, municipalities and other partnerships that improve the health of our natural watershed resources.

A multi-stakeholder committee reviewed the ABCA's first Watershed Report Card which was published at the end of 2006. This agency was one of the provincial leaders in this area. We must now use this comprehensive document over the next five years as a tool to engage landowners in continued efforts to improve water quality and forest conditions.

Port Franks has been a part of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority since its formation in 1946. The former municipality of Bosanquet supported this formation. The design and construction of the 1949 Cut was the first major project of the Conservation

Authority. In 2006 a major erosion control project in Port Franks' Armstrong West was completed and will provide protection for several cottages.

The completion of the Port Franks – Armstrong West erosion control project was an example of the technical accomplishments that can be created with local CA leadership combined with government support and cooperation with landowners.

Funding partners helped the ABCA create the valuable Better Beach Knowledge – Water Quality in the Classroom program. This is an important way to improve the water quality knowledge of the next generation of stewards. We know that one of the most effective ways to create a better world for tomorrow is to educate the young people of today.

The anniversary celebration is over but the important work of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority continues, and the Board of Directors will work hard to preserve and enhance the legacy of watershed stewardship success in the decades to come.



*Bill Weber, Chair of
the Ausable Bayfield
Conservation Authority Board
of Directors.*



The ABCA Board of Directors for 2005-2006.

Directors on board develop watershed-wide vision

Message from ABCA Board of Directors

One of the requirements of the Board of Directors, as a group and as individuals, is to understand the workings of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), all of its sources of funding, the many projects it undertakes and the services it provides.

The board must understand the services provided to the member municipalities, community groups and individual landowners. Part of this understanding is to meet and learn what expertise the staff have and the challenges they must overcome before they can carry out a project.

Coming from a municipal council to the conservation authority board requires a shift in thinking, a shift to a bigger picture. The work of the conservation authority goes beyond municipal boundaries or even county boundaries, it goes upstream to the headwaters and downstream to the mouth of the watershed. As well, many projects are undertaken today to produce positive outcomes decades into the future. This understanding is essential for a Board of Directors member to be a positive voice for conservation at municipal council and in the community.

One objective of the Conservation Authority is to have board members who can speak knowledgeably and positively at council and in the community about its conservation projects and activities.

Board members are the messenger for conservation and therefore it is important that ABCA Board members are able to explain the decision-making processes to municipal councils, their friends and people they meet in the coffee shop. One of these decisions involves why upstream municipalities help fund projects in downstream municipalities and vice versa, a watershed concept.

It is the job of staff to provide the decision makers with more and better information on the operations of the conservation authority. Likewise, it is the responsibility of the board member to ask for information on matters that they don't understand.

A positive working relationship between the Board of Directors and staff is key to a healthy working environment and strong community support.

Strong community support is important for the long-term protection, improvement and management of our watershed natural resources. Only through a cooperative working relationship will the health of our watersheds improve.

Vision Statement

Our vision is one of clean and usable watersheds where human needs and the needs of the natural environment are balanced to ensure quality of life and biological diversity today and in the future.

2006 Board of Directors



Bob Bell
Huron East



Adrian Debruyn
Adelaide Metcalfe &
Middlesex Centre



Bill Dowson
Blewater



Jim Ginn
Central Huron



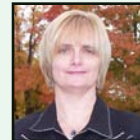
Harvey Ratz
South Huron and
Perth South



**Lawrence
McLachlan**
North Middlesex



Bob Norris
West Perth



Teresa Ondrejicka
Lucan Biddulph



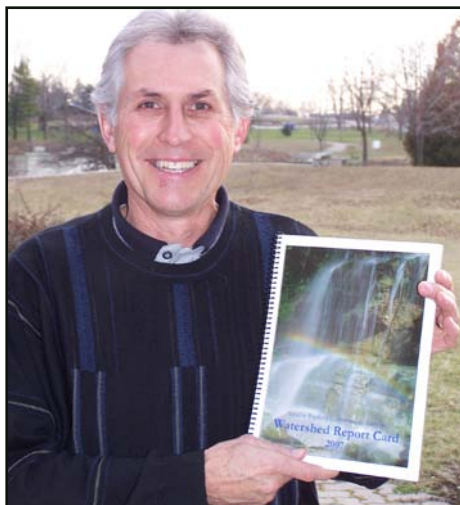
Bill Weber
Lambton Shores &
Warwick

ABCA staff professionalism turns goals into reality

By Tom Prout, General Manager and Secretary Treasurer, ABCA

I want to start my report by thanking staff for their dedication to conserving the environment and their professional and ethical approach to providing services to landowners, municipalities and community groups. There are many key components to a successful organization and, in my opinion, good staff are at the top of this list. The staff of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) makes the organization efficient, effective and productive.

The way in which they deliver and carry out services develops a good reputation in the community and their commitment to a team approach makes this a great place to work, every day. The highlights of 2006 are numerous and are an indication of the ABCA staff's dedication to the organization and to improving the health of the watershed environment. I will start with the continued growth in the conservation education and information program. The increase has included both student and adult participants. This success started with a decision of the Board of Directors to focus on day-use programs and staff's dedication to making it work. Credit goes to Erin, Matt and Julie for developing and delivering great events and programs. Surveys for Species at Risk continued with great rewards. Record numbers of snuffbox, kidney shell and northern riffle shell mussels were found in the Ausable River. The numbers found put the Ausable River amongst some of the most important in Canada for these species. Knowing which aquatic species live in our watersheds is an



Tom Prout, ABCA General Manager and Secretary Treasurer, holds up Watershed Report Card.

important tool that helps us manage our watershed resources better. I want to thank Shawn Staton, of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, for his continued support of this work. Installation of the Bend Way Weirs in Port Franks brought to fruition an erosion control project that was several years in the making. The weir will provide protection to several properties in the Armstrong West subdivision for many years to come. Alec Scott deserves a major vote of thanks for his patience and perseverance in making this project a reality. Forestry projects and stewardship on private lands continues to be a very important program which contributes to the improvement in the quality of our watershed rivers. The technical assistance provided by Kate Monk and Ian Jean is an important reason for the success to these two programs. Communities have shown a great interest in making a positive change to the environment. The Old Ausable River Channel community

GMS REPORT

group is a recent example of how community efforts can make a difference. The first of a two-year project started off with a packed hall and an excellent exchange of information and interests. Kari Killins, our Aquatic Biologist, is doing a great job of coordinating this partnership project.

Drinking Water Source Protection Planning is one more important component of overall watershed planning. This program will provide watershed municipalities and individual landowners with valuable information. Landowners who are currently within municipal wellhead protection areas already carry liability, prior to the development of the Clean Water Act. The information collected as part of the Source Protection Planning process will provide these landowners with valuable information about their potential risks, potential methods of reducing or eliminate their liability and funding to carry out the same. The Management Committee and team of staff are doing a great job and will continue providing a quality service and produce an important conservation planning product.

The 60 projects for 60 years of conservation was a great way to highlight the broad spectrum of services provided by ABCA since its inception in 1946. Many of those who participated in the ABCA's 60 years of successful programs appreciated the opportunity to share their stories and fellowship during the July 30 dedication to conservation.

Watershed Report Card great finale for special year

Continued from previous page

Congratulations to the 60th Anniversary Committee, led by Tim Cumming.

The Watershed Report Card release in December was a tremendous finish to an excellent year. This report provides a reference to where we are and where we need to go on our journey of constant improvement in our Watershed Health. Mari Veliz and her team

of staff and peer review committee have set a new standard for Watershed Report Cards.

These are but a few of the ongoing programs and projects of the ABCA, all of which deserve to be recognized. Keep reading and you will find that this **Annual Report** contains a summary of dedication, professional service and quality products.

Good work, everyone!

ABCA welcomes new staff, thanks outgoing staff

Staff Report by Tom Prout, General Manager and Secretary Treasurer

Training and Development

Today's staff members, now more than ever, need to be professionals with up-to-date training and knowledge of current developments in their area of expertise. At the same time, the public whom we serve is looking for all of these characteristics in a generalist. Someone with whom they can develop a trusting relationship for advice, assistance and implementation of projects.

Be it the undertaking of private land stewardship or background knowledge about water quality, there is a need for a high level of trust. The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) provides training and development opportunities for all of its staff every year. However, the training is not just about the science. Staff also needs to know about the barriers to adaptation and cooperation when it comes to dealing with community groups and individual landowners.

Doing one's job is no longer just about completing the task and documenting outputs. Funders of projects and the public are also looking at how well we document outcomes. Did we make a difference

with a specific program or project?

Some outcomes, such as an erosion control project preventing erosion, are easy to measure and others outcomes, such as stewardship improving water quality, are harder to measure. In some cases there is no agreement on how best to measure outcomes.

The *how, when, where* and *who* around measuring outcomes will become clearer as the science, research and applied practices are undertaken and analyzed. I want to extend a sincere heartfelt appreciation to all past and present staff for their dedication to conservation. I, and the ABCA, wish the following staff great success in their future endeavors:

- Nancy Becker, in her new position with the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board.
- Dan Mosurinjohn, in his new career as a teacher.
- Laura Dunkerly, in continuing her college education.
- Aaron Clarke, in continuing his college education.
- Matt Deline, in his new position at M. M. Dillon Ltd.
- Erin Dolmage, in her new Maitland Valley Conservation Authority position.
- Matt Redmond, in his pursuit of a teaching career.
- Tyler Whitfield, Co-op Student,

South Huron District High School (SHDHS).

- Jake Homuth, Co-op Student, from SHDHS.

The ABCA welcomes the following individuals and looks forward to many years of exciting and successful conservation and stewardship programs, projects and services:

- Angela Baitz, Aquatic Resource Technician.
- Hope Brock, Water Resources Technician
- Teresa Ainslie, Well Survey and GIS Support.
- Abbie Gutteridge, Well Survey and GIS Support.
- Julie Hicks, Conservation Education Specialist.
- Ross Wilson, Water Resources Technologist.
- Michael Herrington, Conservation Lands Patrol Officer.
- Carol Noonan, Conservation Lands Patrol Officer.
- Susan Brocklebank, Source Protection Project Assistant.
- Ian Jean, Forestry and Land Stewardship Specialist.

The ABCA is also proud to continue its cooperative working relationship with Huron, Middlesex, Perth and Lambton Counties.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority staff have volunteered an estimated 1,000 hours in 2006 towards ABCA special events.

Ausable Bayfield welcomes new team members



New staff at the ABCA and Source Protection in 2006 were (clockwise from top left) Ross Wilson, Angela Baitz, Julie Hicks, Ian Jean, Sue Brocklebank, Hope Brock, Carol Noonan, Michael Herrington, Teresa Ainslie, Abigail Gutteridge.

ABCA staff provides expertise at provincial level

Several staff of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority assist with provincial-level activities by sitting on committees on behalf of Conservation Ontario.

Tom Prout

- The Ontario Rural Council, Liaison with Ontario Federation of Agriculture Committees
- Liaison with Ontario Soils and Crops Improvement Association
- Liaison with the Ontario Institute of Agrologists, National Watershed Stewardship Coalition

Alec Scott

- Ontario Regulation 97/04 Peer Review Committee
- Provincial Flood Forecasting

and Warning Committee

- Federal/Provincial Cost-Share - Hydrometeorology Committee

Davin Heinbuck

- Professional Engineers Land Drainage Committee

Kate Monk

- Ministry of Natural Resources Advisory Committee on Trails
- CA Extension Services Committee

Mari Veliz

- Lake Huron South-East Shore Working Group and Science Subcommittee
- Co-chair of the Ausable River Recovery Team

Cathie Brown and Tim Cumming (ABCA/MVCA):

- Provincial Working Groups on Stakeholder Consultation and SPC Training.

Although sitting on these committees takes time it also provides a learning opportunity and helps develop partnerships.



Conservation Education creates memories to last lifetime

by Julie Hicks, Conservation Education Specialist

Nature programs

Throughout the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority's 60th Anniversary celebration year, education programs and special events have been at the forefront, providing and instilling better environmental conscience to students and adults alike through positive and memorable outdoor experiences.

How many people can remember the first time they smelled a pine tree, or heard the call of



Julie Hicks

a screech owl? For many people living within our watershed, this experience may have occurred at an ABCA program or special event.

New in 2006

The year 2006 brought many new and exciting opportunities for the Conservation Education Department, including the planting of Autumn Blaze trees, the 'Watershed Guardians,' at schools throughout the watershed.

A new curriculum-based program, **Better Beach Knowledge – Water Quality in the Classroom**, was implemented. New technology, tailored to the Bannockburn Conservation Area, was introduced, bringing nature hikes to a whole new level within the watershed.

For the past six years, the ABCA's Spring, Fall and Winter Nature Programs have provided

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

watershed youth with memorable environmental education experiences in outdoor settings.

In 2006, area schools participated in half-day and full-day curriculum-linked nature programs at a number of sites including; Morrison Dam CA, Rock Glen and Clinton Conservation Areas (CAs), Bannockburn Wildlife Management Area and in their schoolyard.

Camp Sylvan

It was another great year for the Sylvan Conservation Program. Seven classes came to Camp Sylvan this past May, June, and October and participated in one of Ontario's longest running Conservation Education Programs. At camp, students in grades six through eight, take part in 2.5 days of ecology-based, outdoor experiential programs on a variety of topics such as Orienteering, What's in the Water, Habitat Improvements and Go Wild.

'The Spirits of Sylvan Roam the Land'

Another event the ABCA hosted at Camp Sylvan was an education workshop; **Rekindle the Spark**, attended by outdoor educators employed by Conservation Authorities throughout south-western Ontario.

This unique workshop was created by a former Education Specialist, Patti Donnelly, many years ago and the tradition is still going strong.

The intent of the workshop is to share ideas, thoughts and

experiences pertaining to the field of outdoor education. A new first-person interpretive program was developed this year to generate new ideas. Sylvan Spirits told the story of the land from the Camp and surrounding area. Keep your eyes open, as this program will be offered to the general public as a 2007 Conservation Education fundraiser.

Thank you

Thank you to those who volunteered and gave support to the Education Department during the ABCA's 60th Anniversary celebration year.

The Conservation Education department looks forward to another successful year delivering conservation education programs and special events.

ABCA Conservation Education Programs are intended to promote, develop & encourage in people positive watershed stewardship & responsible actions towards the environment.

ABCA Special Event Attendance

March Break Day Camp ...	40
Easter In the Park ...	180
South Huron Trail Run ...	166
Bannockburn Fall Hike ...	300
Night Hike & Owl Prowl ...	170
Huron Perth Agriculture & Water Festival ...	712

OTHER EVENTS ATTENDED

- Inventors' & Science Fair
- Ontario Envirothon
- AD Latorell Symposium
- Hosting Rekindle the Spark

New Communications Plan guides promotion of ABCA

By Tim Cumming, Communications Specialist

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approved a new Communications Plan for the ABCA at the beginning of 2006.

It had been about 14 years since a Communications Strategy had been updated.

The new Communications Plan incorporated the Media Relations Plan which was approved in 2005.

The ABCA hired a Communication Specialist in June of 2005. Half of the employee's time is committed to the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Partnership Source Water Protection Project, while the other half of their time is devoted to ABCA projects.

The Communications Specialist's work includes preparation of the Annual Report, which you are reading at this moment. There are 200 copies of the Annual Report produced and it becomes an important communications tool for the Board of Directors, partners and an important historical and technical resource for staff.

Other work of the Communications Department includes:

- Updating of the ABCA website.
- Preparation of the Conservationist of the Year Award ceremony.
- Preparation of media releases, advertisements, poster panels, flyers, brochures, reports and other



ABCA COMMUNICATIONS

communications products.

- Rudimentary graphic design and facilitating the printing of ABCA communications products.

It was an honour for the Communications Specialist to also serve as Chair of the ABCA 60th Anniversary in 2006. Any trepidation about being a 'rookie' in a chairperson's role were soon relieved by the hard work of the Anniversary Committee.

Thanks go to the community members Ken Oke, Teresa Ondrejicka, Paul Hodgins and Bob Norris as well as staff members who served at various times including Bev Brown, Sharon Pavkeje, Judith Parker, Matt Redmond, Mari Veliz, Julie Hicks and many others.

The Communications Specialist has a privileged position to be able to work closely with all of the hard-working ABCA staff in a support role - assisting efforts in marketing and promotion, work with stakeholders, meeting organization and preparation and product creation. The year 2006 included the first Conservation Journalism Awards to recognize those local journalists and media organizations devoting resources to the coverage of environmental issues. General Manager Tom Prout presented awards to journalists from print and broadcast media.

The ultimate goal of communication is to facilitate the success of ABCA programs.



Members of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority 60th Anniversary Committee included Julie Hicks, Teresa Ondrejicka, Bob Norris, Ken Oke, Paul Hodgins, Judith Parker, Tim Cumming, Sharon Pavkeje and, not shown in photo, ABCA Staff Mari Veliz and Matt Redmond.



Communications products are not an end in themselves - but a means to engage the public in program success.

ABCA hosts Flood Emergency Response Workshop in 2006

A Flood Emergency Response Workshop was hosted by the Water and Planning department of the ABCA in 2006. The annual workshop was held in March. It was well-attended by municipal, county and provincial agencies. The keynote speaker was Steve Beatty, of Emergency Management Ontario. Steve provided an overview of what a Flood Annex is and what should be included in the development of one for emergency preparedness. A Flood Annex should be a key component of any local Emergency Plan. There were 22 attendees from outside agencies.

Autumn of 2006 was one of wettest on record

Flooding Report, By Davin Heinbuck, ABCA Lands and Water Technologist

Overall, 2006 was an active year for rainfall events and flooding.

In addition to several snowmelt events during the winter, and a heavy rainfall event in the summer, we experienced one of the wettest falls on record.

During the winter of 2006, the ABCA watershed experienced some minor snow melts and a response in higher stream flows; however, the major spring freshet and ice-breakup occurred during mid-March.

Fortunately, moderately-increasing temperatures, minimal snow pack from earlier mild weather, and little rainfall, ensured that flooding impacts would be minimal across the watershed. Ice conditions and break-up was monitored throughout the freshet and presented minimal flooding problems in the perennial at risk areas of Port Franks and Grand Bend. No ice jam related flooding occurred. In late July of 2006, convective thunderstorms developed in Lambton and Middlesex Counties. The most intense cell in these slow-moving thunderstorms became stationary over the Nairn area and caused major flooding problems in a very small area. Based on data collected through the Volunteer Rain Gauge Network, we were able to determine that some areas received more than 200 mm of precipitation over a period of a couple hours. The rapid runoff caused severe flooding in a number of tributary streams of the Ausable River. The flooding caused extensive damage to local road infrastructures including the undermining and washouts of several



A GEONOR weighing gauge precipitation station was installed at the ABCA Administration Centre in Exeter.

culverts; the most notable being the collapse of the Petty St. Culvert, a well-traveled Middlesex County road.

The final noteworthy event of 2006 was not a single event, but rather a succession of many smaller rainfall events. Beginning in late September and through mid-November a measurable amount of precipitation fell most days. In some parts of the watershed, October rainfall amounts were nearly three times the normal amounts recorded.

In response to the cumulative rainfall, streamflows generally remained quite high throughout the fall, and although some overbank flooding occurred, very little damage resulted from the flooding of watershed river systems.

The ABCA, in cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Canada, maintains and operates a data collection network within its watershed area to provide watershed municipalities and residents with advance warning of life-threatening flood events on the watershed. This monitoring network also provides information on low water conditions, groundwater and surface water interactions and the relationship of stream flow to aquatic health. The data collection network allows staff to monitor watershed conditions including water levels and precipitation on the major channels of the Ausable River, Bayfield River and Parkhill Creek watersheds.

continued on next page

Streamflow stations functioning well in 2006

continued from previous page

In addition, the ABCA also has the ability to monitor ground water levels in some of the significant groundwater aquifers in the watershed. Computerized monitoring systems in the field can transfer information by telephone line directly to the office in Exeter. Maintenance of the streamflow monitoring stations is shared by Authority staff and Environment Canada staff. Based on an agreement with the Ministry of the Environment, the ABCA is responsible for maintenance of groundwater monitoring stations (see Groundwater Studies).

As part of a provincial initiative by the Ontario

Ministry of Natural Resources to increase the number of streamflow monitoring stations, the ABCA added new streamflow stations at Tricks Creek west of Clinton, Black Creek at Hensall and the Little Ausable River west of Lucan in 2005 and, as of 2006, were functioning to their full capability. In addition to these new stations, a GEONOR weighing gauge precipitation station was added to the station at the office in Exeter.

This new precipitation gauge supports other local rain gauges and will provide a more accurate measurement of water content in snowfall accumulations.

ABCA involved in provincial Low Water Response work

By Alec Scott, P. Eng., Water and Planning Manager

Low Water Response

During 2006, the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) continued to be involved in the Provincial Low Water Response Plan due to drier than normal conditions over parts of the watersheds.

The Provincial Low Water Response Plan was created after extreme dry conditions were experienced in parts of the Province in 1999 and is used as a guiding document for how municipal and provincial agencies should react during periods of water shortages. The Plan defines levels of response to low water conditions.

Level I, where a 10 per cent voluntary reduction in water use is requested; Level II where a 20 per cent voluntary reduction in water use is requested; and Level III, where mandatory water use restrictions may be put in place.

Low water conditions cause concerns relating to lack of water for proper crop production and for domestic supply. A lack of water supplies also raises concerns for ecosystems, wetlands and fisheries.

The ABCA Low Water Response Team (WRT) was formed in September 2001 and is made up of municipal and provincial agency representatives as well as representatives from the ABCA, agricultural groups, golf course and the aggregate extraction industry.

The ABCA watersheds started the year with no Low Water Advisories, but by July, higher than normal temperatures and spotty precipitation moved the Upper Ausable watershed into a Level 1 Low Water condition.

MONITORING WATER LEVELS AND STREAM FLOWS

In August, the Bayfield River watershed was also included in the Level 1 Low Water condition. However, above normal precipitation in late September and October, along with improved stream flows, resulted in the cancellation of all Water Level Advisories in November. The WRT met once and had five telephone meetings during the year.

As part of the Low Water Response program, a network of volunteer rain gauge readers was established within the watershed in 2005.

In 2006, the majority of the volunteer readers were switched to a web based data entry system allowing easier access to data and a method of providing the volunteers with data from other readers. The approximately 25 volunteers will provide valuable information on the extent and amount of precipitation received in the watershed. This will supplement the existing automated rain gauge network in relation to ABCA water quantity programs.

Levels of Response

- Level I
 - Voluntary Reduction 10%
- Level II
 - Voluntary Reduction 20%
- Level III
 - Mandatory Water Use Restrictions

continued next

ABCA inspects, maintains water and erosion control structures

By Alec Scott, P. Eng., ABCA Water and Planning Manager

Structures, Operation and Maintenance

As part of the ABCA mandate and agreements with watershed municipalities, the ABCA inspected and performed maintenance on water and erosion control structures owned or constructed by the ABCA. These include Parkhill Dam, Morrison Dam, a number of flood control channels, and erosion control structures in various parts of the watershed.

Most of the inspections and actual maintenance work are carried out by Authority staff unless it is determined that it would be more efficient to contract the work out to local companies. As a result of the inspections, minor repairs were completed on a number of structures by Authority staff. Work included improvements to safety signing, vegetation control around structures, repairs to gabion structures and general minor repairs to prevent larger maintenance problems in the future. For one flood control project, the Mud Creek Channel in Port Franks, agreements were reached with the Municipality of Lambton Shores and local landowners to undertake works to realign the outlet of Mud Creek to its original configuration to reduce the ongoing erosion of the beach dune system. Annual adjustments to the outlet across the beach area

MONITORING WATER LEVELS AND STREAM FLOWS



ABCA Field Staff Tony Drinkwalter is shown during inspection of Morrison Dam.

should prevent this problem from occurring again.

During 2003, the Ministry of Natural Resources announced The Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Funding program (WECI) to fund major maintenance work on Conservation Authority Flood and Erosion Control Projects. As a result of this, the ABCA applied for and received 50 per cent grant funding for a number of major maintenance projects.

Parkhill, Morrison dams receive safety upgrades in 2006

By Alec Scott, P. Eng.

WATER AND EROSION CONTROL

In 2006, the following WECI projects were continued or completed:

Parkhill and Morrison Dam Safety upgrades

In 2006, monitoring piezometers were installed at Morrison and Parkhill Dams. In the short term, the readings from the piezometers will be used to confirm or update stability analysis results from the Dam Safety Assessments completed in 2004. Over the longer term, the instrumentation will provide data to ensure early detection of any seepage problems which may develop in the dams.

continued on next page



Upgrade work at Morrison Dam in 2006.

WATER MANAGEMENT



The Armstrong West Erosion Control Project neared completion in 2006. The project, costing an estimated \$925,000, will protect homes and cottages in the area of this project.

Armstrong West erosion control project near completion

By Alec Scott, P. Eng., Water and Planning Manager

Other WECI projects completed in 2006 included the following:

Armstrong West Erosion Control Project

After a lengthy approvals process, the installation of seven Bendway weirs to halt rapid erosion in the Armstrong West subdivision in Port Franks was substantially completed during October and November. The project was considered to be major maintenance of the original 1949 Ausable River Cut project. The project will be completed in the spring of 2007 with final restoration, installation of navigation buoys, and registration of maintenance easement agreements on appropriate properties. Totten Sims Hubicki Associates were the consulting engineers on the project, and the construction was completed by B. F. Environmental

WATER AND EROSION CONTROL

Consultants Limited. The total estimated cost of the project is \$925,000.

Port Franks Ice Management Project

Work on this project, which will involve maintenance dredging of the 1949 Ausable River Cut project to reduce ice jamming potential in the Port Franks area, has been delayed pending the results of environmental approvals for the Armstrong West erosion control project. In 2007, it is anticipated that a final work plan for the dredging will be prepared and the necessary approvals obtained.



The Stewart Gully erosion control project, erected in 1981, is shown above during a recent inspection.

Erosion Control Structure Inspections

The consulting firm of Riggs Engineering Ltd completed detailed inspections of the following erosion control projects: Nairn Cemetery Erosion Control, Stewart Gully Erosion Control, Grand Bend Area E Erosion Control and Bayfield River Tuckersmith Erosion Control.

While annual inspections and routine maintenance work have been carried out by ABCA staff, this project involved inspection by the consulting engineer, review of original design details and recommendations for major works which could be needed over the next 30 years. Any major items identified will be included as part of future work plans.

WATER MANAGEMENT



Water Safety Training

The Water Safety Training project involves providing training to Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) staff and member of local volunteer Fire Departments in relation to the dangers of working around water control structures or being called to a rescue situation around the structures. Volunteer Fire departments were targeted for the training because they do not have a specific water rescue capability. The training for Volunteer Fire Departments was completed in the fall of 2006 and ABCA staff training is scheduled for spring of 2007.

South Huron firefighters (at left) take part in water safety training.

New mapping completed for regulation revisions

by Tracey Boitson, GIS/CAD Specialist

Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, supports programs and projects at the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA).

GIS, as the name implies, has information that is linked to a spatial or geographic location.

It is for the storage, display and analysis of geographic data. At the ABCA, GIS staff can be involved in creating databases, linking databases to a spatial layer, data manipulation (aggregation, changing file formats, etc.), map creation, or more complex analysis involving queries, map algebra or modeling.

In 2006, GIS staff worked to complete mapping and gather information for the watershed report cards. In total 37 different maps were created for use in the report, on the website and for presentations. Analysis was completed to determine 'Historical or Potential Wetland' locations which may help in the future to determine where stewardship projects could be carried out.

Mapping was also completed in support of the Ausable River Recovery Strategy, the Old Ausable Channel Long-Term Management Plan project, property management initiatives and planning and regulation inquiries. As well, monthly rainfall maps were created from data collected by Volunteer Rain Gauge network participants for use by internal staff and network volunteers.

Generic Regulation mapping was refined and

GIS MAPPING REPORT

mapping produced and delivered to the 16 lower-tier municipalities. As well, digital layers were supplied to those municipalities who requested it for use in the production of Zoning Bylaws maps and/or for display on their internal Intranet Mapping Applications.

Areas mapped included: all known wetlands, the top of banks in apparent valleys; regulatory flood limits and meanderbelts in unapparent valleys; shoreline hazard areas and; other areas to be regulated. As well, map books for shoreline regulated areas were created at a 1:2,000 scale making it easy to identify the limit of the regulation along the Lake Huron shoreline.



Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Mapping Initiatives in 2006 included data from the Volunteer Rain Gauge Network.

ABCA to partner with five CAs on new map portal

by Tracey Boitson, GIS/CAD Specialist

continued from previous page

These map books are used by internal planning and regulation staff and were distributed to shoreline municipalities and counties.

The ABCA is participating in a GeoSmart project with five other CAs. The six CAs have been working together to allow public access to CA GIS data through a Map Portal, to standardize data used in Generic Regulations mapping, and to develop large-scale mapping specifications.

The map portal is a one-year pilot to run from March 2007 to March 2008. The six CAs data will be hosted by a third party and served to the Internet through this third party. A business plan is to be developed to determine the feasibility of the system and the pros and cons of working as a group of CAs. The standardized data format and mapping specifications should benefit all 36 Conservation Authorities.

The current ABCA GeoPortal is still available to internal staff within the ABCA administrative offices. In 2006 an update was completed on the GeoPortal. As well, summer staff consolidated all planning and regulations data into one database which is now linked to the mapping layer information. Staff have been using the GeoPortal daily and are able to get information about historical and current planning and regulation files by selecting a location on the map. The ABCA was also partner in the SWOOP project that collected colour aerial photography for South Western Ontario.

Poor weather in the spring and fall delayed the project and, as a result delivery of the full area, will not be until early 2007.

Higher-resolution photography was to be flown in 2006 along the shoreline but has been rescheduled for the spring of 2007.

GIS MAPPING REPORT



Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Mapping Initiatives in 2006 included projects such as the Dunn Drain realignment.

Shoreline erosion monitoring stations revisited

As part of the project to update mapping along the Lake Huron Shoreline, lake bluff profiles and underwater near-shore profiles were surveyed in 2006 at eight long-term erosion monitoring station locations.

Some of these stations have records dating back to 1973. The last full survey of all eight stations was completed in 1994. The information collected will be used in conjunction with new lakeshore photography and mapping to review long-term erosion rates along the shoreline.

Planning keeps development out of hazardous areas

By Geoffrey Cade, Supervisor of Water and Planning

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) works in partnership with its regional and local municipalities within the watershed.

The Conservation Authority provides input and technical support on broad land use policies (the municipal Official Plans and Zoning by-laws) but also on a host of individual planning applications which include severances, minor variances, and subdivisions.

As development takes place it is important that it be located safely away from such hazardous areas as floodplains or unstable slopes.

The Conservation Authority staff has specialized in environmental watershed planning including issues as floodplain development, slope stability and natural area protection. As part of the land use planning process, the Conservation Authority assesses how a development proposal conforms with the provincial Natural Hazard policies. The Conservation Authority's comments help prevent risks to life and property, and to protect the interests and liability of our member municipalities.

It is also very important that development takes into account the need to protect natural areas. The Conservation Authority also provides input on how a proposal conforms with provincial Natural Heritage policies. As part of the planning process, it is vitally



Geoffrey Cade

WATER AND PLANNING

important that development take into account the need to protect natural areas and those areas which provide a source for clean ground and surface water.

In 2006, the Conservation Authority provided formal comment to its member municipalities on 115 different planning applications.

The ABCA also responded to numerous requests for information from members of the public, from lawyers and from real estate agents.

In 2006 the ABCA responded to 128 inquiries from lawyers. These inquiries are very important in providing prospective purchasers of property, or people wishing to do work in high risk areas, a prior understanding of the natural hazard risks involved.

Delivery of the Conservation Authority's development review program has benefitted greatly from a number of Authority initiatives. For example, the updated mapping, completed in conjunction with the adoption of Ontario Regulation 147/06, and the Conservation Authority's GIS Geoportal system, combine to create a swift, efficient tool for staff responding to development proposals.

In addition, in 2006, the Planning and Regulations Department implemented a new database for efficient file management and recovery.

These initiatives have all contributed greatly to improving the delivery of the Conservation Authority's development review program.

ABCA continues leadership role in addressing sinkholes

In an effort to follow through on the recommendations of the ABCA Sinkhole Investigation Study, a Sinkhole Implementation Strategy was developed by The County of Huron, the Municipality of Huron East and the ABCA with input from stakeholder groups. The goal of this strategy is to protect and enhance the quality of the water draining into sinkholes as we have learned through the study that there is a direct link between surface and groundwater through sinkholes.

Although this Strategy is in its early stages, options under consideration include spills contingency planning, promoting Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) and amending Official Plans and Zoning By-Law

SINKHOLE INVESTIGATION STUDY

Policies where practical. It is expected that discussions with the public and landowners will take place early in 2007, with reporting and recommendations by 2008.

A stewardship outreach program is currently ongoing in the Sinkhole Region thanks to a Trillium Foundation Grant. To enhance water quality in the sinkhole drainage areas, landowners developing BMPs on their land receive stewardship visits by ABCA staff and are presented with funding opportunities. For more information on this, please see the section of this report entitled Community Groups.

ABCA's new Regulation 147/06 goes into effect

By Andrew Bicknell, P. Eng., Regulations Coordinator

The year 2006 was very busy within the department as it saw the adoption of a new regulation.

On May 4, 2006, the new 'Generic Regulation' (Ontario Regulation 147/06) came into effect and replaced the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority's former ***Fill, Construction and Alteration to Waterways Regulation***.

Key changes with the new regulation include:

- Improved consistency amongst the province's 36 Conservation Authorities in regard to the definition of hazard lands; improved consistency with provincial planning policy; and more specific recognition of certain classifications of lands to be regulated including shoreline areas, and wetlands for example.

The new governing regulation is the ***Regulation of Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses*** (Ontario Regulation 147/06).

The Conservation Authority's regulations, under Section 28 of the Conservation Authority's Act, empower the CA to regulate specific activities within hazard lands and environmentally-sensitive areas. Activities are generally regulated through the permitting process.

Adoption of the new regulation has presented some challenges to the Authority. In conjunction with the new regulation, an increased area along the Lake Huron shoreline is now regulated. This has not, however, resulted in a significant increase in staff activity in these areas.

In consultation with shoreline residents' associations and municipal partners, a new 'Shoreline Implementation Policy' was developed and adopted to improve program delivery.

REGULATIONS

This would mean that some of the more minor lakeshore-related activities would no longer require formal approval (permit) from the ABCA.

As a result of the new regulation, the existing Policy and Procedures for the Administration of ABCA Fill and Construction Regulations, has been revised and will be circulated for approval in 2007.

Additional tools have been made available to staff this past year which should translate into improved program delivery. Firstly, the development of a new database commenced in 2006 which should mean more efficient data recovery and improved data management capabilities.

Secondly, associated with the development of the new regulation, it was necessary to update the Conservation Authority's mapping. To facilitate this, an engineer's study was undertaken to better estimate floodplain limits within the more rural areas of the watershed. Finally, as new digital data becomes available, the quality of mapping made available to staff through the Authority's GIS services is frequently being expanded and improved upon. As this happens, day-to-day activities are made easier.

The Authority's partnership with the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) continued in 2006. Under the Authority's Level II agreement with the DFO, staff review in-water work proposals to ensure that watercourse alterations are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Fisheries Act. The Fisheries Act prohibits the harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat without the prior authorization of the DFO.



Andrew Bicknell, P. Eng., is the ABCA's Regulations Coordinator.

Statistics for 2006

- 55 Minor Works Permits
- 59 Applications for Permission
- 73 Fish Habitat Reviews (including 32 municipal drain reviews)



IMAGE SOURCE:
Joseph R. Tomelleri

Long-term sampling will help us determine trends

By Davin Heinbuck, Lands and Water Technologist

Since the Walkerton Tragedy in 2000, public awareness of groundwater and its susceptibility to contamination has grown dramatically throughout the province.

With the events of 2000, Justice Dennis O'Connor prepared a number of recommendations for the protection of Ontario's drinking water, many of which are already being carried out by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, in partnerships with numerous agencies, including the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority.

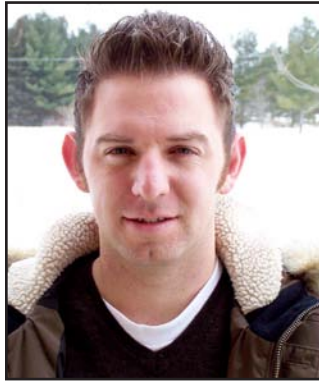
Not only has the ABCA partnered in a number of studies, it has been very pro-active in a variety of groundwater quality initiatives since 2000.

Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network

In a partnership between Conservation Authorities and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, a network of groundwater monitoring wells are in operation across the province.

The Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network (PGMN) initiative has led to the development of more than 400 monitoring wells since 2001. The ABCA currently has 14 active wells throughout the watershed, five bedrock wells and nine wells drilled into the overburden. Hourly groundwater level data has been logged for more than two years in some of the earliest wells.

Telemetry at each well enables access to current water level information through a web-based component of the network. Although we have noticed a slow rise in water levels in many regional aquifers since the inception of the program in 2002, it will still be several years before we can better understand long term trends in groundwater



Davin Heinbuck,
ABCA Lands and Water
Technologist.

GROUNDWATER MONITORING

level data.

Water Quality Sampling is another critical component of the PGMN and the ABCA has groundwater quality data available for each well from 2003 to 2006.

To match the core requirements provincially, water quality is analyzed for nutrients, metals, general chemistry, and in addition, bacteria.

In December of 2006, the ABCA adopted the 'Protocol for Actions,' whereby notices of exceedences of groundwater quality parameters will be sent, in writing, to the respective municipality and landowners. In 2004, the ABCA organized a working group of twelve Conservation Authorities.

The Southwest PGMN Working Group (SWPGMN Working Group) provides both support and a forum for CA staff responsible for administering the Groundwater Network.

The ABCA currently chairs and hosts the SWPGMN Working Group. Similar working groups now exist in Northern, Central and Eastern Ontario. The working groups have played a major role in keeping the network progressive.

This past year has been a very busy and productive one for the PGMN. It would appear that long term funding of the equipment and maintenance of the network has been secured, showing the Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE) commitment to the success of the program. During the upcoming year we will be working towards the renewal of our partnership agreement.



ABCA staff monitor well as
part of Provincial Groundwater
Monitoring effort.

Clean Water Act receives Royal Assent, project advances

By Cathie Brown, Project Manager

The year 2006 was significant in the progress of Source Water Protection efforts as the Ontario Clean Water Act was approved.

The Clean Water Act received Royal Assent on October 19, 2006 and will come into full effect with the proclamation of regulations expected in the spring of 2007.

The new provincial legislation provides a mechanism for communities to protect their supplies of municipal drinking water.

They will do this through Source Protection Plans, developed by a new Source Protection Planning Committee (SPC). This committee will arrive at the plans through a collaborative, locally-driven, science-based process.

The Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Water Protection Project will facilitate the creation of the new committee in consultation with local stakeholder sectors.

The SPC will identify potential risks to water sources in Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley watersheds and take action to reduce or eliminate these risks.

Everyone has a stake in clean water - so the planning process will involve municipalities, Conservation Authorities, property owners, farmers, industry, community groups and the public will all work together to meet the common goal of clean water.

The Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Partnership on Source Water Protection completed a Watershed Characterization Report in 2006, addressing issues of water quality, natural heritage



Teresa Ainslie uses GPS to record location of a well for better records.

SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

and vulnerable areas.

The project also continued technical study of water budgets. The Tier I Water Budget included water quantity (used and available).

Other scientific research included the delineation of Wellhead Protection Area zones and the identification of watershed vulnerability and hazards.

The reports prepared by the technical team will provide valuable information for the work of the multi-stakeholder Source Protection Planning Committee, to protect municipal sources of drinking water.

The local project team also worked closely with municipalities to facilitate new technical studies with funding from the Province of Ontario.

Locally, the project has not only been busy creating technical reports but it has also been communicating with stakeholders and the public through many means:

- The creation of information brochures and public displays.
- The holding of stakeholder meetings.
- Continued development of an active adult learning program for Working Group members.

The local project also implemented a provincial pilot project to update well records to better understand the pressures on our groundwater.

The new Clean Water Act legislation may impact properties in municipal wellhead protection areas or intake protection zones so the local project has been working closely with agriculture, industry and municipal stakeholders to keep them informed of developments.

A new Source Water Protection website was launched in 2006 at www.sourcewaterinfo.on.ca. The interactive website includes a public forum and sources of relevant information and is designed to be able to accommodate password-protected access for members of the SPC and Working Groups.



Enhancing, monitoring watershed only possible through strong partnerships with other supporters

by Mari Veliz, Healthy Watersheds Coordinator; Kari Killins, Aquatic Biologist;
Hope Brock, Water Resources Technician and Angela Baitz, Aquatic Resources Technician

The year 2006 was extremely busy in the Healthy Watersheds Department.

Partnership contributions and donations were utilized to enhance individual property owner self-environmental assessments along the lakeshore and in the sinkhole area, near Staffa. The inaugural Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Watershed Report Card, 2007 provided the community and environmental agencies with information about their local streams. Data collected under the long-term provincial water quality monitoring network (PWQMN) was summarized and compared across the Maitland, Bayfield and Ausable areas for source water protection planning. Routine water quality sampling was expanded to accommodate special lakeshore projects.

A process to develop a management

HEALTHY WATERSHEDS - PARTNERSHIPS FOR WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT

strategy in the Old Ausable Channel, an isolated portion of the original Ausable River that flows between Grand Bend and Port Franks, through the Pinery Provincial Park, was initiated.

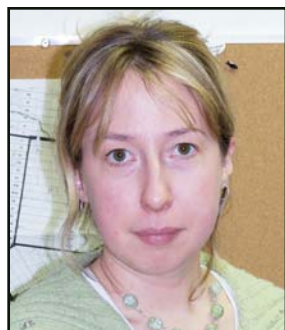
Baseline information about the globally rare freshwater mussel community in the Ausable River was collected.

The main objective of the healthy watersheds' program is to work with the local community and agency partners to monitor and improve water quality and aquatic habitat.

In 2006, partners helped ABCA Healthy Watersheds staff work toward an improved local watershed.



Mari Veliz



Kari Killins



Mari Veliz and Hope Brock, of the ABCA, sample in Ausable Bayfield watercourses during World Water Monitoring Day in 2006.



Hope Brock



Angela Baitz

Ausable Bayfield water quality moderate to poor

by Mari Veliz, ABCA Healthy Watersheds Coordinator

The water quality and forestry conditions in 16 watersheds in the Ausable Bayfield area were summarized and graded. Strategies and specific actions related to the grades were suggested for each watershed. With the intent to re-evaluate the water quality and forestry conditions every five years, this first report allows future changes to be tracked. As well, the document describes the methodology for determining the grades and compares the watershed conditions in the Ausable Bayfield area.

In the Ausable Bayfield area forest cover is limited. Most of the watersheds fall into a grade of D; few watersheds have good forest conditions. Agriculture, and in a few areas, urbanization, have resulted in the clearing of much of the Ausable Bayfield watershed forest cover which consequently results in this poor grade.

The conclusions from the water quality indicators collected in the watershed between 2000 and 2005 suggest water quality in the Ausable Bayfield area is of moderate to poor quality (i.e., mainly C grades). Water quality reflects both the natural features (i.e., soil characteristics, tree cover) and land use. Low forest cover in the area combined with predominantly clay soils, intensive agricultural activities, and

WATERSHED REPORT CARD

urbanization in some locations results in water quality conditions that need improvement.

Improving water quality involves a number of approaches however, the most essential activity is to focus on your own property and identify and prioritize key actions. In all watershed report cards, there is an action item for individuals to refer to their appropriate stewardship guide. Farmers are referred to the Environmental Farm Plan and other rural residents are referred to either the Stewardship Guide for the Lake Huron Coastline (2006) or a stewardship guide that will soon be released in Huron County. Individual efforts that come together will have a positive cumulative effect, as it was a multitude of individual behaviours that lead to degraded watershed health in the first place.

Grading the watersheds helps highlight areas we need to protect and areas that we need to improve. For more information and to see how your watershed scored please check us out on the web:

<http://www.abca.on.ca/reportcard.php>



Stakeholders reviewed Watershed Report Card, a landmark document for the next five years.

Community support makes stewardship possible

By Hope Brock, ABCA Water Resources Technician

The Ontario Trillium Foundation donated \$49,800 to the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation to assist:

- The Friends of the Bayfield River, University of Guelph, Huron County and the Huron Stewardship Council with the delivery of 16 community-based workshops for the Stewardship Guidebook for Lake Huron Shoreline Residents, and

- Residents in the Zurich/St. Joseph's and Staffa area to evaluate current environmental practices and develop projects to improve surface and ground water quality along the lakeshore and in the sinkhole area.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation and resources from the Adopt A Watershed program (Environment Canada) allowed for a more focused approach to watershed stewardship in two watersheds within the Ausable-Bayfield jurisdiction. These included the Zurich Drain watershed, a gully emptying into Lake Huron at St. Joseph, and the Sinkhole Region watershed in the municipalities of Huron East and West Perth. This specific approach involves three main components: outreach, stewardship and assessment. Public outreach is achieved via voluntary citizen ambassadors who speak to their neighbours within the watershed. They explain the project and its goal of improved water quality, and ask them if they are interested in having a stewardship visit.

A stewardship visit involves a visit to the landowner's property by ABCA stewardship staff to help them identify issues that could potentially have

COMMUNITY GROUPS

a negative impact on water quality. In addition to this technical assistance, landowners are provided with information regarding available funding for stewardship projects, which include projects such as improved manure storage, berms, eavestroughs, grassed waterways, establishing buffers along watercourses, and upgrading and decommissioning wells. Landowners are also encouraged to take the Environmental Farm Plan workshop if they had not already done so in the past.

The last approach involves assessment of the water quality. This step is necessary in order to obtain a baseline of data from which we can measure future improvements as landowners continue to undertake stewardship projects. As with the other two approaches, this endeavour is on-going, and just as it took time for water quality to become degraded, it will also take time to see improvements as well.

In the meantime we hope to continue to work with the landowners in these watersheds. As a result of this project, 22 stewardship projects have been completed, or are in the initial stages of completion, while 24 more projects have been identified. In addition to this, 13 people have taken the Environmental Farm Plan workshop. All of these landowners should be congratulated on their proactive efforts to protect and improve water quality in their watersheds.



Program success has only been possible with the support of funders, other partners and landowners in the watershed.

Local initiatives could protect important species

by Angela Baitz, ABCA Aquatic Resources Technician

Monitoring for Freshwater Mussels

The Ausable River, located on the northern fringe of the Carolinian Zone in southwestern Ontario, supports diverse and unique aquatic fauna. At least 26 species of freshwater mussels, 83 species of fishes, and 21 species of reptiles have been found here, making it one of the richest watersheds of its size in Canada. Many are rare and 16 aquatic species have been designated by Committee On the Status of Endangered Wildlife In Canada (COSEWIC), including six mussels, seven fishes and three reptiles.

The Ausable River Recovery Team (ARRT) is made up of representatives from universities and provincial and federal agencies. The team came together in 2002 and have worked collectively to complete a lot of background work on the Ausable River Recovery Strategy (ARRS).

This strategy is currently under review by the federal government, but is set to become one of the first Species At Risk Act compliant recovery strategies in Canada. In July to September of 2006, ABCA, partnered with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), to establish a monitoring program for native species at risk mussels in the Ausable River. A long-term monitoring program is critical for tracking responses of the mussel community for on-going recovery efforts. Seven permanent sites were sampled from Brinsley to Arkona. Results found Threeridge mussels to be the dominant species in the Ausable River.

All six species at risk mussels were found with a range of sizes indicating recent reproduction. Populations of



ABCA staff Angela Baitz and Kari Killins brave the cold waters of the Ausable River to survey rare mussels species found in a scientifically-significant finding.

AUSABLE RIVER RECOVERY STRATEGY

the Northern Riffleshell, Snuffbox and Wavyrayed Lampmussel (all endangered) are healthier than previously thought. Previous mussel surveys found only a few adults of these species at risk mussels suggesting that they were in danger of disappearing from the watershed completely.

The results confirm higher densities than expected of the species at risk. The Northern Riffleshell population in Ausable River is now confirmed to be the fourth known reproducing population remaining in North America, second in Canada. Our results have increased the significance of the Ausable River mussel community and the mussel monitoring will allow the ARRT to track changes in the native mussel community over the long-term to help measure the success of the recovery program.

In the winter of 2006, the ARRT received \$ 90,000 to provide landowners with grants to reduce nutrient and sediment loading. The funds were provided in part by the Government of Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk and were matched with private landowner contributions.



Mussel survey showed species at risk significance of Ausable River. The Snuffbox (above) was one of the mussel species found.



Purple Wartyback mussel found in Ausable.

Stakeholders help direct plan for Old Ausable

by Kari Killins, ABCA Aquatic Biologist

Old Ausable Channel

Long-Term Management Plan

The Old Ausable Channel (OAC) is an isolated portion of the Ausable River.

This historic channel was cut off from the present Ausable River at the end of the 19th century. No longer part of a flowing river, the channel is characterized by clear water and dense aquatic vegetation.

Due to its lack of flow, the old river channel will - in time - convert to a more pond-like ecosystem that may eventually become less aquatic and more terrestrial. The OAC has been identified as an important ecosystem in the Ausable River Recovery Strategy, as it is home to three species at risk fishes, and the oak savannah forest on its shores is internationally significant.

In 2006, the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) and the Ausable River Recovery Team (ARRT) began work on the initial stages of developing a management strategy for the Old Ausable Channel.

A long-term (10 to 20 year) management strategy for the OAC is necessary in order to best benefit the river's ecosystem and the surrounding community. A management plan for the OAC Watershed will:

- Provide a unified vision for management of this unique system across the different stakeholder groups;
- Identify long-term directions and actions;
- Identify education and public information and recreation opportunities;
- Provide guidelines for adjacent land use activities and;
- Promote protection and conservation of significant species and habitat.

In an effort to involve the local community and



Dave McClure, of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation and Kari Killins, of the ABCA, accept a \$20,000 grant from the Grand Bend Community Foundation, from President Hank Krech.

AUSABLE RIVER RECOVERY STRATEGY

all stakeholders, a large public meeting was held in Grand Bend in March 2006, at which close to 100 people attended and voiced their management concerns for the OAC.

Out of this meeting a stakeholder committee was formed that has provided, and will continue to provide direction into the design of the management strategy. This project continues into 2007, and has been generously funded in 2006 and 2007 by the Grand Bend Community Foundation, the government of Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program, the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation and ABCA.

The Friends of the Old Ausable Channel was formed and a new website created at www.oldausablechannel.ca with the help of volunteer Barb Ferris, to share information.



A well-attended public meeting on the Old Ausable Channel Long-Term Management Plan, in 2006, demonstrated local watershed interest in preserving the important ecosystem.

Volunteers help clean up Hay Swamp conservation lands

by Kate Monk, ABCA Stewardship & Conservation Lands Supervisor

Conservation Lands

Conservation Land staff are proud to be stewards of 9,500 acres of Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) land entrusted to their care. The web of conservation areas and forests throughout the watershed are a rich heritage for the ABCA and help ensure a healthy future for generations to come. Public use of conservation lands continues to increase as people become more health conscious and recognize the merits of outdoor recreation.

Off-road vehicle use continues to be a problem on ABCA and private land. Soil erosion, degradation of watercourses, wetlands and aquatic life and disturbance of wildlife are the prime concerns of the ABCA. All terrain vehicle sales have increased yearly in Ontario despite the lack of an organized trail system for responsible use.

About 75 people attended a public meeting hosted by the ABCA in Dashwood to address the issue. Representatives of the Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicles (OFATV), area landowners, municipalities, Ausable River Riders Club, Ontario Provincial Police and ABCA presented information.

The Maitland All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Club proposed a trail system on ABCA land in the Hay Swamp Wetland Complex. The trails would also cross private land between Clinton and Exeter. The agreement would allow ATV use in the swamp on authorized trails and include trail maintenance by the club. With all due respect to the club, the ABCA confirmed its policy of not allowing ATVs or off-road vehicles on ABCA land except where there is an existing agreement (Ausable River Riders Club at Sadler Tract and Parkhill Conservation Area).

The decision was based on several concerns. The swamp does not have suitable areas for trails that would not have negative environmental impacts. Due to the large size of the area (5,000 acres) it would be difficult and costly to ensure unauthorized trails were not used. The trail system would need to cross private land. However, the ABCA received a letter with 20 names of neighbouring landowners opposed to an ATV trail system. Notwithstanding the decision, the ABCA believes an organized provincial

CONSERVATION LAND MANAGEMENT

trail network will help solve the problems of environmental and property damage. Off-road vehicle users are in the same situation snowmobilers were before a trail system was established. The ABCA wishes the Maitland ATV Club all the best in its quest to establish ATV trails on suitable land.

In December, the ABCA hired two part-time patrol officers (Mike Herrington and Carol Noonan) to reduce the unauthorized

use of ABCA lands. The officers will be ambassadors for the ABCA to encourage responsible recreation use but will use the Conservation Authorities Act and Trespass to Property Act if necessary. Both have experience working with the public and enforcing legislation. The ABCA thanks Tony Drinkwalter who has served as the patrol officer for several years.

Spearheaded by Bob Stire, of Crediton, 50 volunteers scoured Hay Swamp on Earth Day (April 22nd) to clean up garbage. More than 12,000 pounds of garbage and 100 tires were collected. The Municipalities of Bluewater and South Huron waived tipping fees for the event and several area businesses donated goods or cash to cover expenses.

The ABCA owns 319 acres of agricultural land acquired through the Parkhill Dam project in the 1960s. This land is rented through a tender process. In 2006, approximately 50 per cent of the land was tendered for five-year leases (2006-2011); the remaining 50 per cent was tendered in early 2007 (2007-2012). The approximately \$40,000 in rental revenue is used to offset the costs of property taxes of ABCA land holdings.



Kate Monk is Stewardship and Conservation Lands Supervisor.

New ways to enjoy nature created at Bannockburn CA

by Kate Monk, ABCA Stewardship & Conservation Lands Supervisor

The Friends of the Bayfield River (FOBR) coordinated the Walk-A-Mile Trail Information Project at Bannockburn Wildlife Area as its contribution to the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) 60th anniversary.

The innovative project included new interpretive signage throughout the property, a 20-minute audio tour script that can be played on CD players or MP3 players as hikers walk through the property, new entrance map, laminated re-usable brochures, GPS units and pedometers. These audio tour files are downloadable from the ABCA website and available at the ABCA and Huron County libraries. The FOBR secured funding for the project and contributed manual labour. The project was launched at the Bannockburn Fall Hike on October 1.

Funding partners included the Huron County Clean Water Project, Municipalities of Bluewater and Central Huron, Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion Communities in Action Fund, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation, Huron Stewardship Council, and Bayfield Ratepayers Association. The ABCA and FOBR provided in-kind support.

The large fishing dock at Morrison Dam Conservation Area was replaced with a modular EZDock® structure.

CONSERVATION AREA DEVELOPMENT



Paula Letheren listens to audio file explaining some of the information about Bannockburn CA.

This composite material is safe for in-water structures and is expected to last longer than wood. Funding partners included the ABCA, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation and EZ Dock Ontario Inc.

A new metal roof was installed on the picnic pavilion at Zurich Conservation Area. Project costs were split between the ABCA and the Municipality of Bluewater.

Hot, dry summers combine with pests to stress trees

By Ian Jean, ABCA Forestry and Land Stewardship Specialist

The watershed forests continue to suffer somewhat from the combined effects of consecutive hot, dry summers in 2002, 2003, 2005 and opportunistic pests and diseases.

The native hickory bark beetle that attacks stressed hickory appears to have just about run its course, eliminating nearly all mature bitternut hickory from some area forests. The hickory's ability to sprout from roots and stumps should enable it to rebound but it will take decades for some woodlots to recover. Those with greater species diversity will likely recover the fastest.

FOREST HEALTH UPDATE

The threat of Emerald Ash Borer continues with a new population confirmed this summer in the City of London, Ontario. The Canadian Food Inspection agency is monitoring the situation and surveying local woodlots. Morrison Dam Conservation Area was surveyed again this fall and was found to be free of the borer. The decline of ash currently observed in some local woodlots is most likely due to the effects of recent heat and drought combined with native pests.



Ian holds up tree cookie showing effects of native hickory bark beetle.

CONSERVATION LAND MANAGEMENT

Forest, landscape diversity assets in changing environment

Managed Forest

Tax Incentive Program

The Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) has moved to the new 10-year term for Forest Plans. This means that plans started in the first year of the program (1998) will end on December 31 of this year. In order to stay qualified for the tax incentive, updated MFTIP plans must be completed, and approved by a Managed Forest Plan Approver and submitted by July 31, 2007.

The Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program brings greater fairness to the tax system by valuing forest land according to its current use. The program is designed to promote conservation of existing forests, good forestry practices and a greater awareness about forest stewardship. The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority has many properties qualified under the program and will update its Forest Plan in 2007.

Forest Management on ABCA Lands

Improvement cuts were completed at three ABCA properties in 2006. Forest inventories were completed by Conservation Authority staff in conjunction with staff from the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA). Donald Craig, who is a Registered Professional Forester and Forester at SCRCA, prepared forestry prescriptions

FORESTRY

for improvement cuts at Wright and Thompson Tracts north of Parkhill and for Sadler Tract south of Sylvan.

The goal of the cuts was to remove poorly formed, diseased and dying trees in order to promote forest health, species diversity and vigorous growth. In general, where mast producing trees such as oak, black cherry and beech that provide important food and habitat for wildlife were present, these were favoured for retention over other species.

The primary species targeted for removal was white and green ash. This was done in an effort to promote the growth of other species in the face of the possible migration of the Emerald Ash Borer in future years. Not all ash was removed, and it will continue to have a prominent place in these forests due to abundant seedlings, sapling and pole-sized trees.

In the face of known and unknown threats, promoting forest diversity at the species and genetic level will be essential for maintaining healthy forests on our landscape. As such, good forest management in the coming years will continue to be proactive in promoting species diversity, somewhat reactive in responding to various new pests and diseases and will require patience to allow natural recovery processes to take place.

WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP

Funding programs help private landowners make changes

Federal, provincial and county governments financially helped citizens complete water quality improvement projects in 2006. In its second year, the Canada-Ontario Environmental Farm Plan Program and associated grant programs encouraged many farmers to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs). In many cases, these grants could be combined with funding from other grant sources.

The ABCA provided on-farm technical assistance and accessed funds for 99 water quality improvement projects. The ABCA thanks the following for contributing funding for stewardship projects in our watersheds:

- Clean Water Project - Huron and Middlesex Counties;

PRIVATE LAND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

- Canada-Ontario Agreement - Ministry of Natural Resources Clinton District and Middlesex Stewardship Committee;
- Ausable River Recovery Strategy Implementation - Environment Canada Habitat Stewardship Program;
- Afforestation & Biodiversity Project - Ontario Power Generation.

These programs funded a variety of BMPs depending on specific program goals and funding sources: clean water diversion, septic system upgrades, wellhead protection and decommissioning, watercourse livestock access restriction, erosion control measures, fragile land

ABCA tree crew plants tens of thousands of trees

By Ian Jean, Forestry and Land Stewardship Specialist

2006 Tree Planting Program

This spring was my first planting season at the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) and I owe many thanks to Wayne Ford, Tony Drinkwalter, Kate Monk and an excellent tree planting crew for making it a successful one.

A total of 64,270 trees were planted across the Ausable and Bayfield Watersheds on private and municipal lands. Of those, 18,723 were picked up and planted by private landowners and ABCA tree planters planted 45,547.

With a late Easter, the season began on April 21 and all trees were in the ground by June 1. Weather started out dry which allowed good access to the land and cool showers came just when we needed them, prolonging the planting season through to the end of May. Summer rains were frequent, making for excellent growing conditions for trees.

The fall program this year was restricted to ball and burlap spruce, pine and cedar. Hardwoods must be frost hardened prior to lifting for bare root stock. Late frosts and unpredictable fall weather drove the decision to offer only ball and burlap evergreens. Just over 400 trees were planted this fall, all by private landowners. Tree planting projects were concentrated along watercourse buffers, steep slopes and as farm windbreaks. This is where the least amount of productive land is lost, grant money is targeted and arguably where the most environmental benefit is seen. Large block plantings appear to be a thing of the past, meaning there are more, smaller projects. Of 42 project sites, 28 or two thirds were less than 1000 trees.

Shelterbelt Demonstration Site: Planting Trees on Plastic Mulch

Trees can play an important role around livestock barns by decreasing wind speed, reducing heating costs, filtering particulates, controlling odour and creating a visual screen. This spring Ontario Pork and Conservation Ontario partnered with a local producer and ABCA to plant a two and three-row

TREE PLANTING PROGRAM REPORT

shelterbelt demonstration project around a naturally-ventilated hog barn at Lot 37, Concession ANB Stephen.

Seedlings at the demonstration site were hand-planted into a strip of plastic mulch, similar to the technique used by local pepper growers.

The mulch conserves soil moisture by eliminating

evaporation, reduces vegetation competition and the black plastic provides increased soil warmth, providing optimal conditions for establishment and growth of tree seedlings. The technique has been widely used in the prairie provinces and Quebec with excellent results and used only locally in Ontario.

A technical team from La Pocatière, Quebec arrived with Provincial Coordinator Anne Loeffler of Grand River Conservation Authority in May to help lay the mulch. Ours was one of eight demonstration sites across the province funded by Greencover Canada.

Initial survival and growth at the demonstration site is promising. A fall tour of Quebec sites showed enhanced survival of both hardwoods and evergreens planted into plastic. The greatest increases in growth is seen for hardwood species that seem to be able to make maximum use of increased water, warmth and a reduction in competition.



The ABCA's Teresa Ainslie shows the innovative plastic mulch tree planting project on a hog farm near Grand Bend.

Boys, Girls Club's ECO Crew Conservationists of Year

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) presented the Conservationist of the Year award to the Boys' and Girls' Club of London's Environmental Community Opportunities Program (ECO) Crew at the annual ABCA awards ceremony held on Thursday, March 16, 2006 at Ironwood Golf Club near Exeter.

The ABCA presented a conservation edition framed print by Allan Hancock. A tree was also planted in the crew's name at an Ausable Bayfield Commemorative Woods site of their choice. The annual Conservationist of the Year award, which began in 1984, recognizes those who have completed conservation activities such as improving local water quality, conservation farming, reforestation, environmental education, providing wildlife and fish habitat and promoting environmental ethics and awareness.

Past winners include Paul and Vic Hodgins, Shadyside Farms; Ray Letheren, Friends of the Bayfield River; Environmentally Concerned Citizens of Lambton Shores; Andy deBoer; Stephanie Donaldson; Everet and Joan Van Sligtenhorst; John MacPherson; Straw Family; David McClure; and the late George Cantrick, among many others.

The ECO Program has been involved



Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Board of Directors Chair Bill Weber presents the Conservationist of the Year award to Nadine Killeen, Coordinator of the Environmental Community Opportunities Program (ECO) Crew of the Boys' and Girls' Club of London and past coordinator Barry McKnight.

with several ABCA environmental projects, ranging from tree planting to wetland habitat improvement to sign building to the Ausable Walk Restoration Project in North Middlesex. The ECO Crew helped Lucan Biddulph municipal staff remove four truckloads of illegally-disposed garbage from a steep riverbank on Fallon Drive, north of Lucan, over three days. The 2006 award winner was nominated by The Township of Lucan Biddulph.

International team visits ABCA to study extension services

The agricultural extension work Ontario's Conservation Authorities do with farmers was studied in a fact-finding mission by international visitors June 15-21, 2006. Visiting the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) at Morrison Dam Conservation Area east of Exeter were (left to right): Sergey Frolov, Teacher-Assistant (Moscow); Olena O. Kalna, graduate student and researcher (Ukraine); Kate Monk, Stewardship and Conservation Lands Supervisor, ABCA; Dr. Glen Filson, a Professor of Environmental Design and Rural Development at the Ontario Agricultural College of the University of Guelph; Dr. Tetyana Kalna-Dubinyuk, Head of the Extension Department at the National Agricultural University of Ukraine; Dr. Valery Koshelev, General Director of the Federal Training Centre for Agricultural Extension of the Russian State Agrarian University; and Warsame Warsame, a Masters (MSc) student doing international comparative research on agricultural extension at the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph.



ABCA highlights 'Sixty Projects for Sixty Years' in 2006

'Sixty Projects for Sixty Years' were highlighted in the 60th Anniversary celebration of municipal and partnership contributions to conservation since 1946 - the start of Ontario's first Conservation Authority, now the ABCA.

Here are some of the projects:

1. Municipal Tree Planting
2. Ontario Regulation 147/06
3. Armstrong West Port Franks Erosion Control Project
4. Source Water Protection
5. South Huron Trail Mobile
6. South Huron Trailside Reforestation, Erosion Control
7. South Huron Watershed Guardian Tree Plantings
8. Municipality of Bluewater Watershed Guardians
9. Huron East Reforestation Planting at Seaforth Lagoon
10. Township of Adelaide Metcalfe Tree Planting
11. Municipality of Lambton Shores Water Quality Sampling
12. Municipality of West Perth Watershed Guardians
13. Municipality of West Perth Butternut Species Rehabilitation
14. West Perth Earth Day clean-up at Liffey Drain
15. Old Farmers' Park – Walking trail created by Lucan Biddulph's Paul Hodgins
16. Old Ausable Channel Management Long-Term Plan
17. Bio-monitoring project for the Dunn Drain (2006 – 2010)
18. Sixty Species
19. Sixty Classes
20. Better Beach Knowledge – Water Quality in the Classroom
21. Hay Swamp Clean-up
22. Friends of the South Huron Trail Clean-Up Days
23. Communications Plan
24. Stewardship Guide for the Lake Huron Coastline (*Huron County, ABCA, Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation, University of Guelph, Friends of the Bayfield River, Huron Stewardship Council*)
25. Sixty Clean Water Project



Despite a hot day, hundreds of people took part in ABCA 60th Anniversary activities on July 30, 2006.

26. Usborne Central Public School 'Food Production and Soil Management' active learning program (*funded by AGCare, Land Improvement Contractors of Ontario and with background material from Ontario Agri-Food Education and ABCA class help*)
27. Shelterbelt and plastic mulch pilot project (*Ontario Pork, Canadian Pork Council, Conservation Ontario, ABCA*)
28. Johnston – Dowson Drain Realignment
29. Hensall Ethanol Plant Fisheries Assessment
30. Wee Lake Water Quality Program
31. Water Quality Sampling in Pinery OAC
32. ABCA on Lake Huron Water Quality Steering Committee
33. Small Lake Huron Tributary Assessment
34. Watershed Rehabilitation Identification
35. Volunteer Rain Gauge

36. Dunn Drain Hensall Landfill Leachate Assessment
37. Sinkhole Region Water Quality Enhancement Project
38. Zurich Drain Water Quality Enhancement Project / St. Joseph's Drain Assessment
39. Water Well Record Update (SWP ABCA-MVCA)
40. Watershed butternut tree plantings to restore threatened native species
41. Conservation Journalism Awards
42. Development Review
43. Dam Safety and Maintenance 2006
44. Flood Forecasting 2006
45. Conservation Education donations
46. Parkhill Reservoir Fisheries Assessment
47. Implementation Strategy
- Tuckersmith Sinkhole Cluster
48. Nairn Creek

- Rehabilitation
49. Endangered freshwater mussel survey
50. International agricultural extension study team visit
51. Ausable River Recovery Strategy
52. Sixty kilometres of trails
53. ABCA Lands Inventory
54. ABCA 60th Anniversary Logo developed; community logo winner chosen; ABCA 12-part historical column series prepared
55. Port Franks Ice Management
56. 2006 Conservation Dinner breaks fundraising record
57. Southwestern Ontario Orthophotography Project
58. 'Rich in tradition, focused on the future'
59. Too many to mention!
60. Watershed Report Cards



Kristin Strang and Susanne Strang are shown with volunteer drivers Herman Steffens and Jerry Mathers in the new South Huron Trail Mobile donated by the Strang family in memory of long-time conservationist Gordon Strang.



The erection of South Huron Trail markers in November of 2006, by ABCA field staff Tony Drinkwalter, Wayne Ford and South Huron District High School (SHDHS) co-op student Jake Homuth, was praised by the South Huron Fire Department as a safety enhancement and aid to emergency crews.

Municipal foresight helped protect local watershed

By Tim Cumming, ABCA Communications Specialist

The Roots of Conservation,

1946-1950

The following is the first of 12 columns produced in 2006 about the Ausable Bayfield watershed's conservation pioneers.

All 12 columns appeared in watershed media during the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the formation of Ontario's first Conservation Authority – the former Ausable River Conservation Authority, now the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority – and the creation of the Conservation Authorities Act of 1946.

Anyone who has ever experienced the damages wrought by a flood has come face to face with Mother Nature.

It is hard to believe that only sixty years ago (nine years after Thames River floods left 4,000 Southern Ontario residents homeless) this province had not yet created an organized response to flooding on a watershed basis.

We can be proud that local conservation pioneers in the Ausable Bayfield watershed led the way in Ontario, envisioning the need for a strategic response to the threat of flooding.

If we had the benefit of the magic Delorean car from *Back to the Future* we could voyage back in time to March 2, 1946 and a McGillivray Township council meeting (quoted from minutes by local historian Andrew Dixon) that “it is the belief of this council that the ruthless ploughing of flooded grassland together with the uncontrolled cutting of timber is creating a condition which is beyond the power of this and other municipal councils to control therefore this council requests the minister to have a survey made of the Ausable River Watershed to determine the conservation measures necessary to ensure proper land use of this area.”

Later, on June 1, that council called for “a meeting for the establishment of a Conservation Authority for the watershed of the Ausable River situated in the Counties of Huron, Lambton and Middlesex.”

The new Conservation Authorities Act of 1946 was clear that new Ontario CAs had to grow out of local initiative with municipal leadership, cost sharing and watershed-based planning. Conservation

“It is the belief of this council that the ruthless ploughing of flooded grassland together with the uncontrolled cutting of timber is creating a condition which is beyond the power of this and other municipal councils to control. Therefore this council requests the minister to have a survey made of the Ausable River Watershed to determine the conservation measures necessary to ensure proper land use of this area.”

COLUMN ONE

Authorities were to grow from the ground up, not the top down. Watershed municipal leaders, veterans and other partners showed that local initiative on July 30, 1946 when they officially created the Ausable River Conservation Authority, the organizational ancestor of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA).

The first five years of the local Conservation Authority's existence were busy times. One of the key events was the creation of the 1949 Conservation Report by the Ontario Department of Planning and Development. The mammoth volume is impressive in its scope and even today the report is an important historical document. By 1950 the local watershed Conservation Authority had more than 300 acres of conservation lands under its protection.

The devastation witnessed in 2005 in New Orleans and area was a reminder about the power of nature. Although we can never completely protect ourselves from all flooding events it's reassuring to know the pioneers of local conservation forged ahead in the creation of a body with progressive planning, watershed stewardship and a concern for water quality.

When the Second World War ended, our veterans returned home and the courage and hard work they devoted to winning the war they turned to winning the conservation battle. We celebrate 2006 as a Year of Conservation and today we say thank you to our local conservation pioneers and acknowledge the awesome debt we owe them for looking to the future way back in 1946.

Conservation Authority builds parks for future in 1950s

By Tim Cumming, ABCA Communications Specialist

1951-1955

We left you in our first column with the tale of a beehive of activity – the first five years of Ontario’s first conservation authority. We told you about the massive job of creating the 1949 Conservation Report, a comprehensive document that would become a lasting watershed atlas and road map to the future.

This month we look at the five years of local conservation that followed – vital years in the development of parks for the future and protection of critical habitat lands.

The first major project of the former Ausable River Conservation Authority was a straightening of the Ausable River Cut from Highway 21 to Lake Huron at Port Franks. The year 1952 was the beginning of the Farm Pond Assistance program. The ABCA and its partners would spearhead programs like this one for decades to come.

In April of 2006 dozens of interested volunteers took part in a Hay Swamp Clean-up Day. More than fifty years earlier – in 1953 – the former Ausable River Conservation Authority planted the first trees in Hay Swamp.

The year 1953 also saw the local Conservation Authority initiate the vision for a land acquisition that would result in the Pinery Park. The Province of Ontario carried on the work which was begun and created a legacy: a wonderful natural tourist destination and an important ecosystem. The Pinery protects almost half the Oak Savanna in the world and is home to the single largest contained area of Oak Savanna on the planet. We can thank the pioneers of local conservation for their work in laying the foundation for this precious resource.

Jean Davies Wright, in her book *The River and the Rocks*, writes that: “When the Pinery Provincial Park was opened about five miles southwest of Grand Bend in 1957, it consisted of over 5,000 acres of virgin land with about 6,000 feet of Lake Huron beach, and it included part of the old river bed. Here today the Ausable receives the attention it deserves. Its course is kept free of vegetation, and its flow through the sand dunes to its outlet is wide and unhampered – a proper ending for that ancient river.”

COLUMN TWO

The early 1950s were the days when Exeter’s Riverview Park Reservoir was dredged.

The Conservation Authority purchased Rock Glen Conservation Area, home of scenic Rock Glen Falls, in 1954.

The local conservation body had land holdings of more than 1,600 acres (660 hectares) by 1955.

Ontario’s first Conservation Authority was off to a busy start in its first five years and in the years that followed the authority moved steadily forward in advancing the cause of conservation.

But some of its busiest years were yet to come: The last half of the 1950s would see the creation of Morrison Dam. But that’s a story for another day.



Kate Monk came up with the ABCA 60th Anniversary slogan: ‘Rich in tradition, focused on the future.’



Tom Prout (back row, fourth from left) is shown in his younger days as a camper at Camp Sylvan.

Morrison Dam created, Pinery lands protected in area

By David McClure, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation Director

1956-1960

The 1950s saw the development of two large projects in our Ausable Bayfield watersheds.

Although both ended up being wise land-use initiatives neither might have been developed if there had not been some outside influences or pressures.

These projects were:

1. The building of the Morrison Dam and;
2. The development of Pinery Provincial Park.



Flood and erosion control was an early mandate of our local Conservation Authority but there was another reason for development of Morrison Dam. The Exeter canning factory pumped wash water from the mill pond. Water was often in short supply during the height of the canning season. Luther Penhale, from the cannery, and Andrew Dixon, an authority member, perceived that a dam could be built at the bridge crossing of Concession 2 in Usborne Township.

This would enable the development of a 25-acre reservoir with a depth of 19 feet and producing 185 acre feet of water which would augment water supply for wash water being pumped to the cannery.

The dam and reservoir construction began in 1956 and the new dam and bridge was constructed and opened by 1959. The reservoir was named after John Morrison, the authority chairman.

The reservoir provided many side benefits besides a water supply. The planting of trees and the development of hiking and fitness trails enabled the area to have several additional recreational uses. The reservoir's original purpose has now disappeared as the cannery now uses treated water originating in Lake Huron.

The development of the hiking trail to Exeter has greatly enhanced the value and accessibility of the Morrison trails. Not to be forgotten is the annual stocking of the reservoir with fish, enabling the enjoyment of another recreation.

Pinery Park might have ended up as private

COLUMN THREE

development land

The wonderful provincial park we know and love as The Pinery contains 4,200 acres of wooded land with miles of sand beach, dunes and the pristine old river channel. The park contains the largest area of oak savanna woodlands in North America.

This area of land west of Highway 21 and between Huron Woods and Port Franks was once owned by the Canada Company. In 1953 this jewel of woodland nearly ended up in private hands for residential development. The Conservation Authority, with the encouragement of the London Chamber of Commerce, proceeded with a plan for a park development because the province was not interested in developing another park.

Eventually the province adopted the Pinery plan in 1957 and the park was opened in 1959. It is greatly to the credit of far-seeing citizens and the Conservation Authority that the Pinery Park was saved from private development. Now, almost a million people living within a 150-kilometre radius of the park have access to a beautiful and unique recreational area.

The late 1950s saw vision turned into action. The environmental benefits and recreational enjoyment of these two major projects are the living legacy that grew out of the roots of that vision by local conservation pioneers.

- David McClure, of RR 2 Grand Bend, is a longtime conservationist, local volunteer and a director of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation. Before retirement in 1990 he was head of the Geography Department at South Huron District High School.

Resources consulted:

1. A. Dixon, 'A Tour through 25 years of Conservation,' Ausable River Conservation Authority, RR 3 Exeter, 1971.
2. A. Dixon, 'What Most People Don't See at Grand Bend.' A. Talbot Ltd. London, 1963.
3. W. Sherwood Fox, 'Tain't Running No More – 20 Years After.' Oxford Book Shop Limited, London, 1958

Early 1960s dawn of new conservation education legacy

By Matt Redmond, Former ABCA Conservation Education Specialist

1961-1965

Camp Sylvan has had an incredible impact on thousands of children and adults. For some it has changed the way they look at a snake, bird, tree, or stream. For some it has changed the way they relate to their peers and teachers. For others, it has been a turning point in their lives.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) has been coordinating the Sylvan Conservation Program at Camp Sylvan since 1964. Camp Sylvan, which is owned by Scouts Canada and located southwest of Parkhill, is a 350-acre pristine natural area that offers the diversity of coniferous and deciduous forests, ponds, streams, fields and meadows.

The first half of the 1960s were busy times for the young conservation authority and as the ABCA celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2006, it's important to note that the creation one of Ontario's first residential-based conservation education programs - now the longest-running program of its kind in Ontario - occurred during this time.

In 1963 the former Ausable River Conservation Authority (ARCA), now the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, brought forward a proposal to the London District Council of the Boy Scouts Association of Canada, the Ontario Department of Education, the Department of Lands and Forests and local school boards. The ABCA's proposal was to create a partnership with the London Scouts Association to lease Camp Sylvan (a permanent Scout camp) and maintain it as the location for the residential Conservation Science School where the ABCA could provide hands-on learning to students in a natural environment.

Thanks to Terry McCauley's vision and initiation in 1963 when he proposed the creation of a residential environmental school, and the commitment and dedication of the ABCA, Scouts Canada and teachers,



COLUMN FOUR

the Sylvan Conservation Program at Camp Sylvan has been the longest-running education program of its kind in Ontario.

During the first year of operation of the Camp Sylvan Conservation Science Program in 1964 sixty-one male high school students attended a week-long camp. Although the name and format of the program have changed slightly through the years, its goal and commitment of educating watershed residents about conservation and the importance of nature resources has remained steadfast.

Since 1964, more than 20 000 students, teachers, parents, and visitors have been privileged to share the experience of Camp Sylvan.

At camp, students take part in a two and one half day ecology-based, outdoor experience where they sleep in chuck wagons and attend classes on a variety of topics such as orienteering, forestry, water quality, and play the survival game. Spending days and nights immersed in the environment provides children with a sense of connection beyond what single day field trips can provide.

To many people Camp Sylvan means positive experiences and long-lasting memories. This is no more apparent than with current ABCA General Manager Tom Prout. As a participant in one of the first school groups, as a junior leader, and as a coordinator, there is little doubt that the Camp Sylvan experience of learning in the outdoors, working with people, and practicing conservation had a major influence on Tom.

"To me personally, Camp Sylvan means the beginning of a career," he explained. "After one trip to Camp Sylvan my career path was set. Under the category of 'most likely to become' in my grade 8 yearbook it says 'Manager of the . . . Conservation Authority'."

We celebrate 2006 as a Year of Conservation and today we say 'thank you' to our local conservation pioneers and acknowledge their work in the development of the Sylvan Conservation Program, an outdoor experience connecting children with nature for more than 40 years.

Conservation Authorities, like us, have grown

By Ted Jones, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation Director

1965-1970

The 1960s were a very positive time in our history. We had muscle cars, flower power, bikini bathing suits, field parties and the Province of a 'Chicken in Every Pot.'

The Conservation Authority was in a positive mode as well, starting their largest project ever: the construction of the Parkhill Dam. This followed years of engineering and negotiation to acquire the land required for this project.

Richard Strong and Associates was commissioned to do a development plan to include the approximately 2,000 acres of land adjacent to the dams and reservoir.

The land that was to be flooded was cleared of trees and shrubs (mostly Hawthorne trees). The sound and sight of bulldozers, earth movers and chainsaws was pretty well continuous during daylight hours throughout early construction.

The Stewart Gully project, a gabion structure 55 feet deep or high (depending which way you are looking) was completed in 1966. Construction of the road to the beach and day use area was carried out as well as sand trucked in for the beach area.

The Parkhill project was high profile at this time but our usual duties in other areas were also carried out such as regular maintenance and operation at Rock Glen Conservation Area, Thedford, Morrison Dam and Lucan Conservation Areas.

The outdoor education program and Camp Sylvan were growing and very popular with the area schools.

Our tree planting program was quite popular and the old saying holds true that "the only better time to plant trees than today is yesterday."

It has been a pleasure to travel back in time to days past. I find one of my greatest rewards is thinking of all the people involved whether directors, staff or other dedicated people with whom we worked and did business. Some pretty special persons are attracted to this field.

I got my old Authority uniform out to show the present Conservation Authority staff. There it was, something between what people wore while working at a gas station and what you could buy at a war surplus store following the Second World War.

I was issued this uniform in 1966 and wore it

COLUMN FIVE



Ted Jones, a former Conservation Authority staff member and longtime volunteer and director with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation, holds up the uniform he wore during his days with the former ARCA.

with pride. I tried it on recently and it does not fit anymore. Guess what – I have grown. So has the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority.

Like my uniform, some things from the 1960s don't fit the same in 2006 and I'm sure the ABCA will change and grow and adapt with the times.

Congratulations to the ABCA and to the other Conservation Authorities in Ontario. You have truly grown.

- Ted Jones is a resident of Exeter and worked at the Conservation Authority as field staff starting in 1966 and served as General Superintendent from 1975 – 1992. He is a longtime member of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation board.

Conservation in local watersheds starts with youth

By Tom Prout, ABCA General Manager and Secretary Treasurer

1971-1975

My career with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority started in 1964 – when I was still in elementary school.

A look at my Grade 8 year book clearly illustrates the impact Camp Sylvan had on me: “Most likely to be Manager of the Ausable River Conservation Authority.” (The Bayfield River watershed was added in 1972).

My interest in the out-of-doors and conservation was activated by my very first trip to Camp Sylvan . This interest was solidified in 1967 when I had the opportunity to be a participant in the Provincial Junior Conservationist Award program.

From 1967 to this very day I have worked for conservation authorities in Ontario with most of my time at the ABCA. My conservation activities included tree planting; conservation area maintenance; coordinating Camp Sylvan; working under the tutelage and mentorship of Ted Jones; helping Roger Martin, the Resources Manager from 1971-1975, with a variety of planning projects; learning about forestry research from Fred Von Athlen, of the Canadian Forestry Association (who was using the Parkhill Conservation Area for hardwood plantations); coordinating the Provincial SWEEP program; and undertaking conservation area users surveys at various locations across Ontario.

In 1971 I had the privilege, as a leader for the Ontario Junior Conservationist Program, to coordinate and help author the first watershed report for the Bayfield River watershed. This was a great experience and I learned about project management and staff supervision. In the fall of 1974 I obtained my first position as a Resources Manager for the Napanee and Prince Edward Conservation Authorities. I credit my success to the experience I gained during my summer employment (1967-1974) and the support from more experienced Resources Managers in Ontario.

The survey crew and junior conservationists were the brainchilds of Art Latornell. The Junior Conservationist Award Program provides young people with the opportunity to experience watershed conservation first hand. This was an exciting opportunity for me as I was a Junior Conservationist in 1967 and then, only four years later, I led such a group doing a watershed report for my favourite conservation authority.

COLUMN SIX

My group of Junior Conservationists included the following individuals: Garry Belanger, from Georgetown; Mike Hamilton, from Sudbury; David Hawke, from Orillia; Thomas Hurlbut, from Fergus; Douglas Mann, from Virginiatown; Larry Murray, from Embro; Bruce McGillivray, from Ottawa; and Robin Moore, from Kingston.

The watershed survey emphasized present and future conservation activities based on information about wildlife, soils, water quality, land use, and vegetation. The lower Bayfield gorge was the focus of the study because of its unique topography and large wooded area.

With the assistance of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment a variety of inventories were completed and form part of the report. Participants also learned how to reference documents such as the Physiography of Southern Ontario and Soil Capability for Agriculture maps. These were great learning opportunities for young adults from the city. The Junior Conservationists did a great job and go down in history as producing the very first report for the Bayfield River watershed. The early 1970s were a time of great change at the ABCA with the introduction of the Bayfield River watershed in 1972 and the valuable addition of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation in 1974. We added conservation area land during the early 1970s, moved into our third office, opened Bannockburn Wildlife Area to public use for the first time, expanded to include Lake Huron shoreline and planted tens of thousands of tree seedlings by machine and by hand.

I would like to thank those who had the insight to form the first conservation authority in 1946, to join with the Bayfield Watershed and lakeshore area in the 1970s, and to form the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation (which has greatly assisted in the areas of conservation education, barrier free nature trails and property acquisition).

The years 1970-'75 were times of great change – and many of those changes began with young people like myself who experienced conservation through education and entered the conservation field or incorporated watershed stewardship into their own farms, careers or businesses.

World changed in 1970s but ABCA mandate was constant

By Davin Heinbuck, ABCA Lands and Water Technologist

1976-1980

The year was 1976. Wild Cherry was singing 'Play That Funky Music.' René Lévesque and his Parti Québécois had swept to power in Quebec. Jimmy Carter was elected United States President. Guy Lafleur and his Montreal Canadiens were hoisting the Stanley Cup.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), meanwhile, was completing fill and floodline mapping for Seaforth, Clinton, Bayfield, Exeter, Ailsa Craig, Grand Bend and Port Franks.

The protection of life and property from flooding was one of the original motivations for the creation of Conservation Authorities and it remains one of our principal mandates today.

Just as the ABCA undertakes studies and projects related to erosion in 2006, thirty years ago the Conservation Authority was working to solve erosion problems at that time. 420 feet of steel sheet piling was erected along the Ausable River in Grand Bend as part of an erosion control project, completed in 1978. Later, in 1980, there would be an additional 455 feet of steel sheet piling installed on the river bank to protect homes on Gill Road from the instability of the riverbank.

Canada's Right Honourable Charles Joseph Clark saw his short-lived government elected in 1979 only to be defeated months later. The ABCA faced its own local problem around that time. The Stewart Gully Erosion Control Project, which had been working effectively for 13 years – began to fail in 1979. That meant it was back to the drawing board to find new and better ways to protect against the erosion problem. Work on flooding and erosion wasn't the ABCA's only work during the late 1970s. The Conservation Authority was supplying trees for windbreaks and developing a new entranceway, gatehouse, washrooms, picnic pavilion and playground at picturesque Rock Glen Conservation Area. Today the Province of Ontario is making fitness a top priority. Back in 1978, the ABCA was creating a fitness trail at Clinton.

The ABCA planted its largest number of trees up to that point thanks to a reforestation program. There were 40,000 trees planted on private land and 120,000

COLUMN SEVEN

trees planted on Conservation Authority lands in 1978. More than 100,000 tree seedlings were planted in local Conservation Areas in 1980. The ABCA was making important purchases of land at that time including the 90-acre Mystery Falls woodland in the Ausable Gorge and an Exeter property downstream of the bridge on Highway 4.



Davin Heinbuck

One of the significant activities during those years was the initiation of a Watershed Plan in 1980. This effort would update the mammoth 1949 report prepared by the Ontario Department of Planning and Development. The ABCA was continuing to fulfill its original mandates while also creating a plan for the future. The plan addressed program areas including flooding, soil erosion, water supply, water quality, recreation, forestry, environmentally-significant areas (ESAs), fish and wildlife and cultural and historical resources.

The late 1970s were a time of great change worldwide but in the Ausable and Bayfield watersheds, the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority continued its work to conserve the environment and protect life and property. Thirty years later, the ABCA is still active working on nature trails for physical activity, administering regulations related to flooding, guiding projects to manage erosion, improving conservation areas and planting trees.

The music and fashion of the 1970s has come and gone (and come again) and the ABCA's job has continued.



Erosion Control at Parkhill Creek, 1971.

Early 1980s were time of new responsibility for ABCA

By Alec Scott, ABCA Water and Planning Manager

1981-1985

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority was given great responsibility in the early 1980s.

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) delegated new responsibilities to Conservation Authorities and the ABCA changed from having a Resources Manager to hiring a General Manager.

Our staff structure was reorganized and we were given the jobs of site plan reviews, tender document approvals, contract awards, final inspections, engineering report approvals and reservoir operating procedures. Our budget reached \$1 million for the first time. We no longer had to go to the MNR for approval for intermediate steps in completing projects and studies. We were ready to embark on a new era but there was no time to ease into our responsibilities. We had a lot of work to do.

The ABCA employed its first full-time professional engineer in 1982 and I was honoured to be the one named to that position. And there were lots of projects to keep me and the other staff busy.

There was the Seaforth Flood Plain Management Study to implement, a Flood Plain Administrative Study in Port Franks, a Dublin Flood Line Delineation Study, a stream rehabilitation project at to restore trout habitat at Trick's Creek, a floodplain delineation and stormwater management study for the Zurich Drain, dune grass plantings in Thedford, erosion control work (on the Walker Drain, Stewart Gully, Nairn Cemetery, Port Franks and Bayfield River Valley) and a study on farm waste management, to name only a few.

The ABCA was busy planting hundreds of thousands of trees, replacing the failed gabion basket structure at the Stewart Gully with a fabric-form mattress protection. The Arkona Lions Club and the ABCA worked together on the successful creation of the Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre, constructed in 1985.

The addition of new responsibilities and growth of the Conservation Authority's work made it fitting that a new Administration Centre was constructed at Morrison Dam Conservation Area in 1983. The building, created jointly with the former Township of Usborne, was made possible through works

COLUMN EIGHT

programs at the time. The ABCA's General Manager, Tom Prout, was a key person in moving that project forward and finding avenues to finance the work.

The ABCA was moving forward with the approval of a new Watershed Plan in 1985. The Watershed Plan identified several main program areas including flooding, soil erosion, water supply, water quality, recreation, forestry, environmentally-significant areas, fish and wildlife and cultural and historical resources.

One of the most significant changes in the early 1980s was the approval of Ontario Regulation 544/84, the ABCA Fill, Construction and Alteration to Waterways Regulation. The document would continue to guide our work until it was replaced this year with a new regulation governing how we apply rules to ensure development is done appropriately to protect life, property and the environment.

We were given great responsibility in the early 1980s and over the next quarter century we have worked hard to exercise that duty for the benefit of watershed residents.



The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) new Administration Centre was constructed in 1983, with the help of existing works programs.

International geologists have visited museum in Arkona

By Judith Parker, ABCA Corporate Services Coordinator

1986-1990

Remember not too long ago when it was predicted we would soon have shorter work weeks and more leisure time? It didn't happen for most of us but that vision of the future did spur us on to create expanded ways to enjoy nature.

The latter part of the 1980s continued to be an ambitious time for the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority as the ABCA pursued increasing outdoor recreation opportunities.

In the summer of 1986 the ABCA marked its 40th anniversary with a number of a special projects, partnerships and ribbon-cutting ceremonies.



In the northern part of the watershed, at the former Bannockburn Wildlife Area, crews installed two footbridges over the Walden Creek and the Bannockburn River. These structures replaced two aging bridges in need of repair.

At Morrison Dam Conservation Area, east of Exeter, a newly constructed boardwalk and footbridge crossing the Ausable River was officially opened on July 30 by Chairman Gordon Johnson. The Exeter Lions Club contributed to this project and continues to support the hiking trails between Exeter and Morrison Dam Conservation Area.

Parkhill Conservation Area was a busy spot as the ABCA operated seasonal, transient and group camping facilities, hiking trails, fishing and canoeing. In 1986, an 'Experience' crew of 13 students undertook considerable trail improvements and installed a new footbridge to enhance the property. In 1995, the campground portion of the property was leased to the private sector.

On August 9, 1986 the ribbon was cut, opening the Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre at Rock Glen Conservation Area. The Arkona Lions Club had been looking for a spot to attractively display Mr. Ted Baxter's extensive collection of fossils

COLUMN NINE

found in the local area so a partnership with the ABCA provided the solution.

Visitors to the museum can see specimens of brachiopods, trilobites, crinoids and horned coral attesting to the fact that 350 million years ago this part of North America lay beneath a warm shallow saltwater sea. The Rock Glen Conservation Area and Arkona Lions Museum have become a destination for international geologists, paleontology professionals and amateurs as well as tourists who enjoy the scenic waterfall and natural heritage of this unique conservation area. On that same day, the ABCA concluded its 40th anniversary celebrations with the opening of the new gatehouse and docking facilities at Port Franks Conservation Area. This property is now operated by the Municipality of Lambton Shores.

In 1989 the Board of Directors membership was restructured from 35 to 16. Following municipal amalgamations in 2000, the board was restructured again to nine representatives from the 12 watershed municipalities. No matter what the changes, the boardroom table has been the scene for setting visions into policy and then into action.

It was in 1988 that I became part of the corporate services staff at the ABCA and what a journey of learning it has been.

The notion that by now, society would have more leisure time seems to be a myth. However, we are lucky to be able to visit a local conservation area and appreciate these islands of nature that are protected for us through the work of the ABCA and its partners that provide leadership together in building better environmental conscience.



Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Carolinian Life Zone at Rock Glen Conservation Area near Arkona, Ontario.

Public has helped ABCA ‘chart the course’ in many ways

By Kate Monk, ABCA Stewardship and Conservation Lands Supervisor

1991-1995

Conservation Authorities of Ontario have the ability and challenge to develop programs to address the environmental issues identified by the local watershed community.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) asked its watershed residents in 1992 to help develop a strategy to guide the organization for the next 20 years. The result was the Conservation Strategy.

This guiding document created a vision for the watershed we want to see in the future and it continues to guide the development of our policies and programs.

The ABCA invited watershed municipalities, government agencies, organizations and individuals to help prepare the strategy. The working group was an excellent mix of students, teachers, retirees, farmers, politicians, conservationists and interested citizens. These volunteers came with their own interests and concerns but left with a deep appreciation of the conservation issues faced by the entire watershed.

The working group members began their work by creating a watershed vision statement: “Our vision is one of clean and usable watersheds where human needs and the needs of the natural environment are balanced to ensure quality of life and biological diversity today and in the future.”

The vision statement recognizes the vital geographical unit of the watershed, not the ABCA. Their goal was to maintain and improve our quality of life and the lives of future generations. This was an important basis for this vision statement and the Conservation Strategy as a whole.

The mission statement describes the role of the ABCA in achieving the vision statement. It is still displayed in the administration centre entrance, boardroom and lunchroom today. “The mission of the ABCA is to provide leadership and management, in co-operation with the community, to maintain and enhance the watershed resources now and in the future.”

The Conservation Strategy provided goals, objectives and action plans for addressing the priority issues of water quality and quantity, education, soil quality, natural areas and watershed planning.

COLUMN TEN



ABCA Stewardship and Conservation Lands Supervisor Kate Monk discusses watershed stewardship with Jim Ginn, a farmer and member of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors. (Photo by Daniel Holm, courtesy Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Water Protection Project).

Developed in 1995, The Watershed Management Strategy geographically targets the Conservation Strategy recommendations within the ABCA watersheds by translating the watershed vision into quantifiable goals. The area is broken into 36 subwatersheds based on stream order and common features with goals of preservation, enhancement or restoration for each subwatershed. In addition, each subwatershed has a more detailed outline of the form, function, issues, stresses, goals, implementation and appropriate Conservation Strategy action plans.

The ABCA uses the Watershed Management Strategy to set program priorities to realize the best investment of financial and staff resources in soil and water conservation. It provides a basis to measure the effectiveness of efforts towards reaching the watershed vision.

The ABCA has just released its Watershed Report Card to evaluate how we’re doing so far. The report includes user-friendly documents to help everyone take the vision and mission identified in the Conservation and Watershed Management strategies and turn those action plans into action and that vision into reality.

ABCA, partners join to create 'trail' to healthy future

By Mari Veliz, ABCA Healthy Watersheds Coordinator

1996-2006

This is the eleventh of 12 columns preserving six decades of local watershed history but as we reach the end of this well-received series it's important to underline this is not the end of our work.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) has unveiled its first Watershed Report Cards during the anniversary year.

The 16 report cards for 16 local watersheds not only document the existing knowledge of your local ecosystem but they provide a game plan for how to improve and protect your watershed in the future. Residents can not only develop knowledge of their watershed issues but they have a road map to turn vision into stewardship action. The completion of a Conservation Strategy in 1993 indicated that the ABCA stakeholders' main issue was water quality. Recommended actions included the continuation of the ABCA monitoring program.

Two years following the publication of the strategy, reduced provincial funding meant the suspension of the ABCA water quality monitoring program. In 2000, the ABCA Board of Directors recognized the need for better water quality information and decided to resume water sampling and in 2003 the ABCA expanded the water quality monitoring program.

Information collected from this monitoring program is summarized in the new Watershed Report Card which was released at a public event on Dec. 1, 2006. This document connects knowledge and water quality and forest conditions information collected over the past decade with the people who can help protect or improve those watersheds – the public.

Although the development of a comprehensive water quality monitoring program has been an important process, the ABCA and its partners have developed many other worthwhile initiatives over the past decade: the Sylvan Trust Fund in support of Camp Sylvan (Ontario's longest-running residential conservation education program), adoption of a Watershed Management Strategy, completion of the ABCA Managed Forest Plan and many other local watershed initiatives.

One of the greatest area successes has been the development of the South Huron Trail. Donors in the South Huron area and beyond rallied around the

COLUMN ELEVEN

extensive development of the MacNaughton Morrison Section of the South Huron Trail and, combined with the trail crossing Morrison Dam Conservation Area, a jewel has been created to achieve nature appreciation, conservation education, recreation, health and tourism goals.

A busy decade ended with a very busy year in 2006 as the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), Ontario's first, celebrated its 60th Anniversary with 'Sixty Projects for Sixty Years.' The year's work included important sinkhole study work and implementation, the purchase of the South Huron Trail Mobile, the Armstrong West Erosion Control Project, the Old Ausable Channel Management Strategy, a scientifically-important freshwater mussel survey, new conservation education programs and much, much more.

This was the year the ABCA adopted its new Ontario Regulation 147/06 to responsibly govern the handling of development and other activities which could pose threats to people, property or the environment.

The year 2006 was a fitting completion to a busy decade of work by the ABCA and municipalities, government partners and partner watershed landowners, schools and residents and we look forward to the decades of positive cooperation to come.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) and its many partners have been busy working side by side over the past 60 years. With your help, we will continue to move forward together conserving our natural environment in the next 60 years.



Mari Veliz, ABCA Healthy Watersheds Coordinator, holds up the Watershed Report Card which will inform stewardship efforts over the next five years.

Ausable Bayfield looks confidently towards decades to come

By Tim Cumming, ABCA Communications Specialist

2007 and Beyond

This final column looks not to the past – and the work of those before us – but to the future. The creation of a sustainable environment for the future comes down to today's conservation pioneers – and that includes you.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority's 60th anniversary in 2006 celebrated what has been accomplished and honoured those whose vision helped Ontario's first Conservation Authority, and its partners, reach many goals. The celebration also created new opportunities for watershed partners to improve and protect the local environment.

We started the year 2006 with an invitation to a party, to a celebration and a challenge to continue the work of conservation's pioneers. Municipalities, schools, governments, landowners and service organizations took up that challenge.

The calendar pages now flip from the anniversary year to the year 2007. The celebration may be over but the work has just begun. We invite you now to join with us over the next sixty years to improve and protect our water quality and forest conditions.

"Where do I start?" you might ask. Your personal watershed stewardship journey can begin with looking at

COLUMN TWELVE

the new Watershed Report Card. If you have good water quality in your watershed, what can you do to protect it? If you have poor water quality, what can you do to improve it? The inaugural ABCA Watershed Report card was released to an enthusiastic audience on Dec. 1, 2006 and it provides suggestions for 'next steps' in your area. There are also stewardship guides which can help you create a 'greener' home, farm, cottage or business. For information on how you can help conservation efforts in your watershed phone the ABCA at (519) 235-2610 or 1-888-286-2610 or visit www.abca.on.ca to read the Report Card for your watershed.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority would like to thank the media organizations who helped convey the conservation issues during this anniversary year and all the watershed partners who have participated in creating 'Sixty Projects for Sixty Years.'

We now say one final thank you to the conservation pioneers who had the vision for this Conservation Authority in 1946 and "Good luck!" to the readers of this column who are taking on the challenge of conserving our environment over the next 60 years and beyond.

ABCA wins Carolinian Canada group conservation award in 2006

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) was a winner of the Carolinian Canada group award for conservation presented on Friday, Oct. 20, 2006 in Ingersoll.

The ABCA was nominated for the award by Cliff Ryan, of the Arkona Lions Club.

Other winners were: Brenda Lorenz, of Sarnia-Lambton; Dolf and Anne Wynia, of Norfolk County, Lifetime Achievement Award; Henry Kock, Lifetime Achievement Award – awarded posthumously; and Dan Bissonnette of Windsor.

Carolinian Canada is a coalition of public and community organizations conserving wildlife and habitats of southwest Ontario's Carolinian life zone — a unique ecological region south of a line from Toronto and Grand Bend. Home to the Tulip Tree, Hooded Warbler, Southern Flying Squirrel and other wildlife found nowhere else in Canada, the zone has the richest biological diversity in Canada—and the greatest number of rare and endangered species. "It's a tribute to our conservation partners and area landowners who have done projects to protect the Carolinian Life Zone," Monk said.



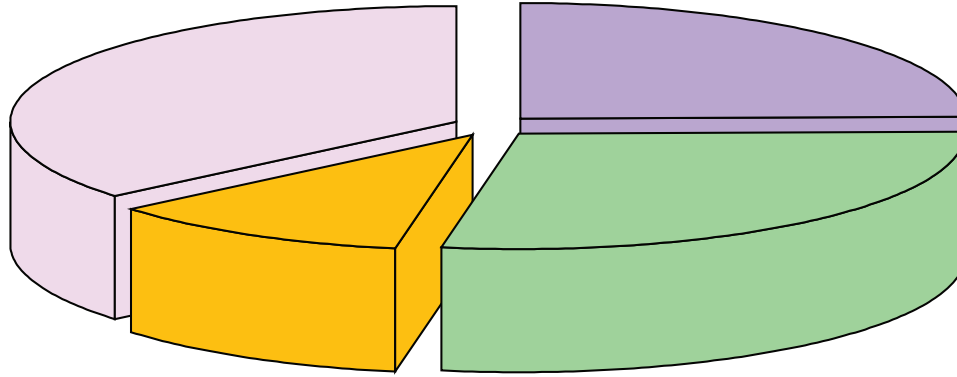
Stewardship and Conservation Lands Supervisor Kate Monk accepted the Carolinian Canada Conservation Group Award from Dr. Gordon Nelson, Chair, of the Carolinian Canada Coalition.

2006 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2006 Sources of ABCA Revenue

Other Sources
\$1,783,421 (36%)

Grant, Provincial
\$1,219,183 (25%)



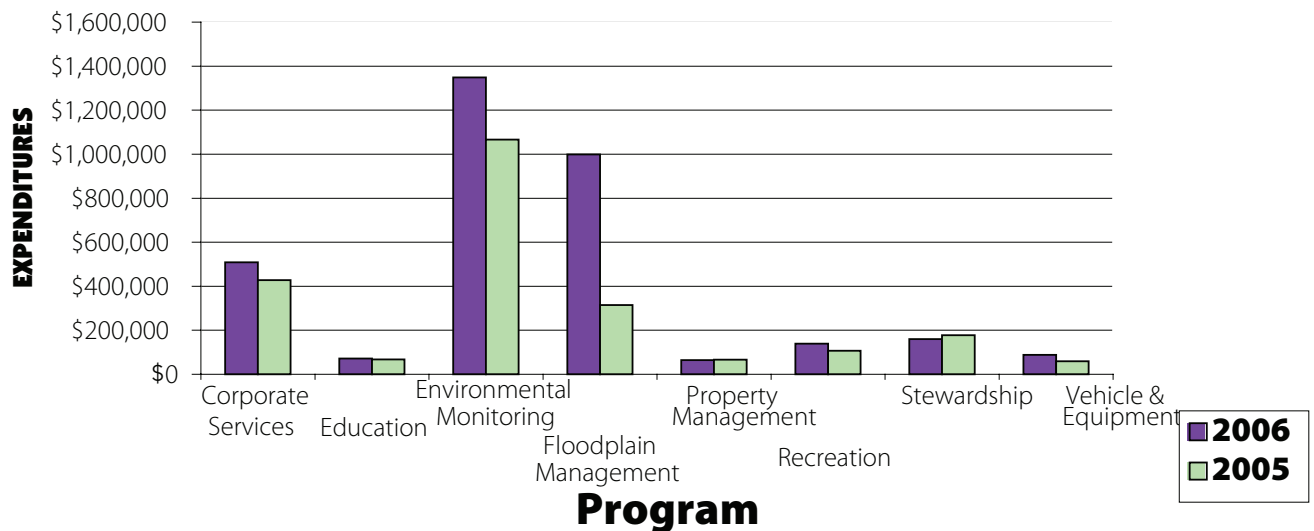
User Fees
\$541,993 (11%)

Levy, Municipal
\$1,380,871 (28%)

* Unaudited figures

2006 Expenditures

ABCA Expenditures for the Fiscal Year 2006 with Comparatives for 2005



* Unaudited figures

Foundation, donors can leave local conservation legacy

By John Walsh, Chair, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation (ABCF) and its dedicated community Board of Directors, volunteers and staff work together with partners to raise money for important conservation projects within the watersheds of the Ausable and Bayfield River system.

The ABCF assisted the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) watershed and community groups in 2006 with funding support towards eligible projects and charitable tax receipts for donations received.

The Foundation does valuable work in the following areas: Conservation Education; Accessible Trails; Commemorative Woods Partnerships; Conservation Dinner (in partnership with the Exeter Lions Club); Morrison Dam Fishing Derby; Associate Memberships; Leave a Local Legacy and Other Partnerships.

We are pleased to support programs throughout the watershed, from Rock Glen Conservation Area in Arkona to Bannockburn Conservation Area near Brucefield and Bayfield.

Conservation Education

- We donate \$1 for every student attending a Conservation Education programme offered by the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority.
- We are a proud funder of the Species at Risk Busing Program, so students can visit a conservation area and learn more about the vital protection of our ecologically-significant Species at Risk.
- The ABCF was honoured to join with local funding partners to help educate the next generation about water safety and water quality through the Better Beach Knowledge – Water Quality in the Classroom program.



Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation Chair John Walsh, taking part at Conservation Dinner.

Accessible Trails

- We are a proud supporter of the South Huron Trail Run, which raises money for future trail development.



- Nature trails are so important for people to get outdoors and enjoy the world around them. The ABCF continues to raise funds for accessible trails at the conservation areas and within communities around the watershed. You can donate to these or other efforts and receive a charitable income tax receipt.

Commemorative Woods Partnerships

- We are pleased to continue the Tree Grove Founders program so contributors can donate towards the purchasing and planting of trees in the Conservation Foundation Commemorative Woods expansion at Morrison Dam Conservation Area.

- In cooperation with J. M. McBeath Funeral Home, the Fifth Annual Dedication Service was held on June 4, 2006. More than 170 people attended, at Klopp Commemorative Woods.

- Approximately 250 people attended the second annual dedication service at Morrison Dam Commemorative Woods on September 17, 2006 in partnership with C. Haskett & Son / Hopper Hockey Funeral Homes.

- At the Commemorative Woods in Park Hill, memorial trees are planted annually in partnership with M. Box & Son Funeral Home.

ABCF Directors for 2006

John Walsh, London – Chair
 Bill Linfield, Varna - Vice Chair
 Peter Darbishire, Exeter
 Ted Jones, Exeter
 Norm MacPherson, Arkona
 Dave McClure, Grand Bend
 Ernie Miatello, Ilderton
 Cliff Ryan, Arkona
 Bev Brown – Treasurer
 Judith Parker – Secretary
 Sharon Pavkeje – Assistant
 Tom Prout – Staff Advisor

Conservation Dinner raised record amount in 2006

By John Walsh, Chair, ABCF

Conservation Dinner

The 17th annual Conservation Dinner raised a record \$44,000, split between the Exeter Lions Club and the ABCF. The generosity of artists, individuals, businesses and volunteers has raised more than half a million dollars for these two organizations. Special mention should be made of Randy Tieman, the CTV sportscaster who returned to his old home town with many unique celebrity sports items to help us set a fundraising record.



Conservation Dinner Chair Ernie Miatello and emcee and CTV sportscaster Randy Tieman share a laugh.

Morrison Dam Fishing Derby

- In cooperation with the Exeter Lions Club, the 22nd annual fishing derby was held the first Saturday of May. The Exeter Lions Club and Foundation stock rainbow trout in the Morrison Dam Reservoir prior to the derby for the enjoyment of young anglers or those young at heart.

- The ABCF also contributed to the purchase and installation of a new accessible fishing dock at Morrison Dam Conservation Area.

Associate Membership

- Associate Memberships are still available. In an effort to recognize the volunteers and contributors to the Foundation, the Board has expanded the methodology for Associate Membership. Effective in 2005, an associate member will include anyone donating \$100 cash or in-kind donation of \$100 minimum value in a 12 month period; contributing more than seven hours of volunteer time or a student donating \$10.

Leave a Local Legacy

- The Leave a Local Legacy campaign continues to grow. We hope that with the wide distribution of our new brochure, more people will consider an environmental legacy as a bequest in their will or as future gifts. Nothing can be more beneficial than to leave this wonderful country in as good a shape or better for our children and grandchildren than we inherited.

- For more information phone (519) 235-2610 or 1-888-286-2610.

Other Partnerships

- We are honoured to work with the Ontario Trillium Foundation, as a funding application partner through the Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee, for water quality initiatives.

- We are a very proud funding partner of the Old Ausable Channel Long-Term Management Plan.

- The ABCF provided support to the fundraising endeavors of generous community members, raising money for the MacNaughton-Morrison Section of the South Huron Trail. Proceeds from two golf tournaments supported this work. The Ellison Travel Charity Golf Tournament and the First Annual Gordon Strang Memorial Golf Tournament raised a combined \$9,000 for the ongoing sustainability of the popular trail. Congratulations, everyone, on your thoughtfulness.

I would like to thank all who volunteer on our Board as we are indeed fortunate to have wonderful representation from the whole watershed area.

In closing, the ABCF is very much a partnership organization. We wish to work with and for groups who have the environment as their offshoot or goal to provide enjoyment, leisure and reminders of the awesome wonders of nature. We ask you to consider helping us continue our valuable ecological work through your donations.

Together, we can create a stronger natural world for tomorrow.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority

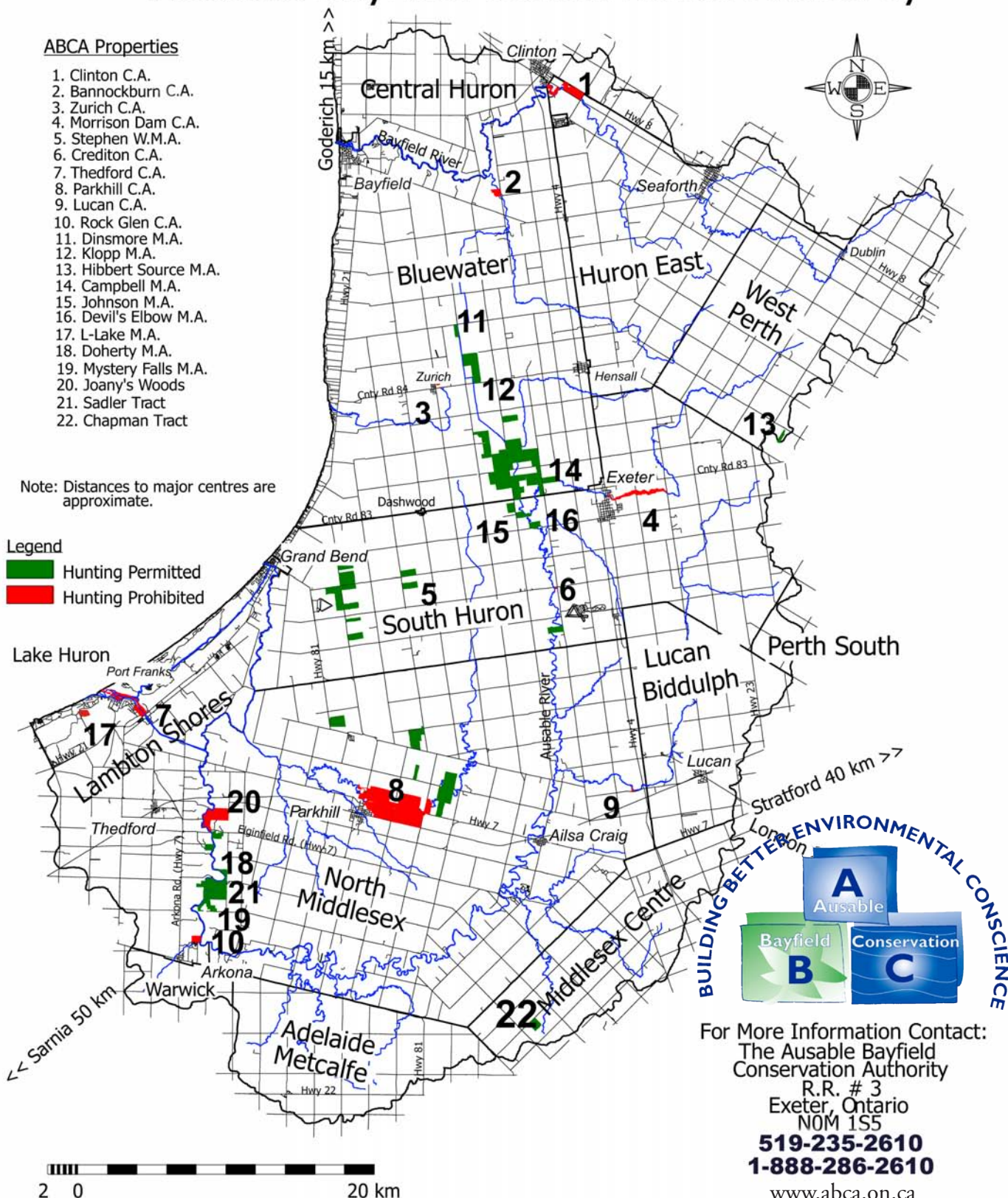
ABCA Properties

1. Clinton C.A.
2. Bannockburn C.A.
3. Zurich C.A.
4. Morrison Dam C.A.
5. Stephen W.M.A.
6. Crediton C.A.
7. Thedford C.A.
8. Parkhill C.A.
9. Lucan C.A.
10. Rock Glen C.A.
11. Dinsmore M.A.
12. Klopp M.A.
13. Hibbert Source M.A.
14. Campbell M.A.
15. Johnson M.A.
16. Devil's Elbow M.A.
17. L-Lake M.A.
18. Doherty M.A.
19. Mystery Falls M.A.
20. Joany's Woods
21. Sadler Tract
22. Chapman Tract

Note: Distances to major centres are approximate.

Legend

- Hunting Permitted
- Hunting Prohibited



For More Information Contact:

The Ausable Bayfield
Conservation Authority

R.R. # 3

Exeter, Ontario

N0M 1S5

519-235-2610

1-888-286-2610

www.abca.on.ca