



# A Ten-Year Business Plan 2010 – 2020

## *Towards a Healthier Watershed*







## Message from the Chairman

**M**ore than sixty years of strong municipal support for conservation action is accompanied by a strong requirement for accountability.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) was the first conservation authority in the province and it continues to be a leader in its approach to managing the watershed resources. Its success has been through the partnerships that have been developed over the years. The foremost of these partnerships is that of our 12 member municipalities who see beyond their individual jurisdictional boundaries in delivery of their mandate.

Although funding comes from a variety of sources, the municipal representatives on the Board of Directors want to ensure value for the local dollar contribution and overall value for all of the dollars spent. It is reasonable that some programs and projects are self-funding while others, by their very nature, cannot generate enough funding to be self-supporting. There are other programs and projects which require 100 per cent local funding. The directors work with the staff to determine the best dollar-value fit to achieve positive environmental change within the confines of fiscal responsibility.

As the key partner, municipalities need to know their financial obligation, the benefits, and anticipated outcomes. As environmental issues grow in importance to society, the role of the conservation authority will also become increasingly important.

Member municipalities rely on ABCA as the expert in local environmental issues and solutions. However, there is no blank cheque. Each program and project needs to be thoroughly discussed.

There are many ways the ABCA can provide assistance to its member municipalities. Drinking



*Lawrence McLachlan, Chair*

water source protection, under the Ontario *Clean Water Act, 2006*, is the most recent example. Municipalities need to acknowledge and utilize the expertise acquired, through this and other initiatives, in ways that benefit watershed residents.

There is an old saying that ‘failing to plan is planning to fail.’ As Chairman of ABCA I fully support the idea of a ten-year business plan to provide directions both in program direction and in anticipated dollar cost.

The Board of Directors has had input into this plan and supports the core values and strategic directions set out in this document. The specific directions of this document will be reviewed annually during budget discussions. This document is designed to answer the questions, ‘Who are we?’, ‘Where do we as a watershed community want to go?’, and “How do we plan to get there?”.

This document provides a foundation for building a healthier watershed but it is only the foundation. The ultimate construction of a healthier watershed can only happen with your help.

**Lawrence McLachlan,  
Chairman**



A family enjoys scenic Rock Glen Falls, at Rock Glen Conservation Area near Arkona.



## Message from the General Manager

*“We need a critical mass of leaders rather than relying on a hero to come along and save the day.”*

– from *Made in Canada Leadership, 2007.*

**L**eadership means making decisions that balance costs and benefits. The business of managing watershed resources is no different.

The economic uncertainties of today don't make the environment *less* important – they make it *more* important.

There are steep economic costs when we do not protect the environment. Decision makers increasingly understand that preserving natural capital is in the long-term environmental, economic and health-related interest of ratepayers.

***Healthy Watersheds = Healthy Great Lakes  
= Healthy Economies***

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), in cooperation with its partners, needs to make educated decisions about what directions we will take, how much it will cost, who should pay, and how the outcomes will improve the health of our watersheds. At the same time, ABCA needs to be able to adjust to changes in environmental and social needs related to perceived and real environmental health issues.

Drinking water source protection is a current project and climate change is a current issue of concern. Both need to be managed in ways that contribute to the improvement of overall knowledge and watershed health. Both require the ABCA to make educated decisions. To do this, ABCA will consult with its



Tom Prout, GM

community partners and stakeholders, as well as all levels of government. The final decision on program directions and costs rests at the watershed level with ABCA's Board of Directors.

In many ways the environmental issues we are managing today were identified in the 1940s with the development of the *Conservation Authorities Act* and were well-documented at that time. Today, the difference is not the issues but how we manage the issues and how we work towards positive actions by individuals.

We are dealing with a more educated public, with higher demands on the environment, and greater expectations

of agencies like conservation authorities. This business plan provides directions and actions towards achieving environmental conscience, positive action and a healthier watershed environment.

In two years, our next *Watershed Report Card* will tell us how we are doing. It will be one measure of how well we did in our leadership and decision-making.

**Tom Prout,  
General Manager and Secretary Treasurer,  
Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority**



Landowners are making improvements to the watershed. ABCA works with them, and other partners, to help make their projects happen.

# Foreword

This business plan provides the overall direction for the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), its member municipalities and numerous community partners for a ten-year period, 2010 – 2020.

ABCA is committed to reviewing the document every five years.

We live in a rapidly changing world and ABCA wants to stay in touch with the needs of its watershed communities.

*'Building Environmental Conscience,'* and facilitating positive environmental action, is what it is all about.

ABCA can achieve its vision and mission for the Ausable, Bayfield, Parkhill and Lakeshore watersheds through partnership, collaboration, and shared leadership towards a common goal and a cooperative effort.

## The Business of Watershed Management

The foresight of our member municipalities and their collective concern for the natural resources of the Ausable, Bayfield, Parkhill and Lakeshore watersheds gives the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority confidence in its leadership role as the 'Natural Champion' to manage the business of watershed resources; improving the health of watersheds through watershed connections and partnerships.

Since their inception in 1946, conservation authorities have carried out a wide range of activities and responsibilities. Some of these were handed down by the federal or provincial government and others meet the needs of the local member



Actions that improve our natural health are only possible with support of the people of the watershed.

municipalities and watershed community organizations.

We are a local organization and, as such, we have to choose the best path to follow.

The watershed approach is the best way to go about managing natural resources and the growing pressures on it by the human population.

## The challenges ahead require ABCA to:

- Be corporately responsible
- Be flexible
  - to address changing environmental conditions
- Build watershed resilience
- Work effectively with multiple partners and community groups
- Know when to share the leadership role with others
- Move integrated watershed management to new levels



ABCA staff members support public efforts to improve forest conditions, water quality and water quantity.

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A bald eagle, above, is seen in the Ausable Bayfield watershed.



This giant sinkhole, in the former Tuckersmith Township, captures the public imagination and illustrates the relationship between surface water and groundwater.



A student learns about nature through the Sylvan Conservation Program at Camp Sylvan.



## Goals of Our Business Plan Building Environmental Conscience

*“We are motivated by the knowledge and understanding that today’s actions help achieve yesterday’s visions for tomorrow.”*

**T**he purpose of this business plan is to consciously plan for success over the next ten years.

As part of developing this business plan, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) is reflecting on the past, its mission and vision statements and its objectives and how they may guide the organization in the future.

We also embark upon this act of reflection to ensure the priorities, as set out in the *Conservation Strategy* of 1995 and the tasks as set out in the *Watershed Management Strategy* of 1996, are the right ones. These documents are in need of review. The *Business Plan* also addresses the anticipated cost and required resources to do this work.

As part of this review and reflection process, we want to look at:

- How much natural capital existed prior to settlement;
- How much exists today, and;
- How much is needed for a healthy watershed environment for the generations of tomorrow.

To do this, we need to better understand the watershed resources through research and studies. Some of that legacy of research will be referenced in an accompanying *Reference Book* (in development) but it is also referred to in this brief plan.



Families enjoy conservation areas like Bannockburn (above). Preserving natural areas, like this one, is only one part of ABCA’s vision and mission.

This is a ten-year business plan – but when it comes to providing service to our municipalities and watershed residents we need to be able to respond in a much shorter time frame.

As a service agency, ABCA needs to consult frequently with our clients to better understand their collective needs and help us realize our vision and mission.

We want to communicate to more people and have them share our mission and vision.

The ABCA’s 60th anniversary, celebrated in 2006, was an example of an opportunity to highlight

the many positive faces with which the public can identify Ontario’s first conservation authority.

Putting a face to ABCA is important to its future communications strategies and to help the public identify with the organization and its goals.

We need the public to be part of this vision, as people who care about their environment with strong environmental ethics, morals and actions.

ABCA has a series of conservation strategies, management strategies and plans, as well as program outlines and policies. These documents provide the overall direction of the organization.

It is important that these documents are reviewed and kept current with the needs of ABCA’s partners and with legislation and scientific, technical and local knowledge.

These documents will be identified along with a recommended course of action and anticipated costs.

The documents are road maps to guide us – but it is people who will chart the course.

# Legislation

## Guiding Documents, Guiding Principles

The *Conservation Authorities Act* was passed in 1946. It is a provincial law which gives local municipalities the opportunity to create watershed-based conservation authorities. This partnership was, and continues to function, on three key principles:

- Watershed basis of management;
- Local, community-based decision-making, and;
- Shared funding to undertake programs

Over the years there have been amendments and additions made to the *Act*, however the objective, as stated in the legislation, has stood the test of time:

“(To) further the conservation, restoration, development and management of renewable natural resources ... ” on a watershed basis in partnership with its member municipalities and the Province of Ontario.

This objective, and the partnership, is as strong today as it was in 1946. The municipalities remain the key partners but the number of



ABCA staff members survey a wetland near Ailsa Craig (photo at left) and maintain boardwalk at Bannockburn Conservation Area (photo at right).

partnerships has grown and, with that, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) has built environmental conscience, and facilitated positive environmental action, by watershed residents.

A business plan draws upon the strength of that legislative foundation as we define our mission, vision and direction for the future.



The citizens of our watersheds are taking a leadership role in improving forest conditions and undertaking voluntary projects protective of water quality and quantity. Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) helps build environmental conscience through informative events, and through technical assistance, and helps navigate financial assistance programs for residents. ABCA works with landowners, municipalities, governments and other partners in providing these services.



# Vision and Mission



*“Applied science,  
the free use of intelligence  
on the materials of experience,  
broadens the base of relevant experience  
beyond the laboratory to the field.”*  
– Ronald D. Brunner, 2004.



The ABCA’s vision and mission  
balances human needs and  
protection of the natural  
environment.

management, in cooperation  
with the community, to  
maintain and enhance the  
watershed resources now and  
in the future.’

The current vision  
and mission statements were  
developed by a watershed  
community group in 1992.  
These statements of direction  
have been reviewed from time  
to time but a full review by a  
watershed community group  
has not occurred since that  
time.

The vision and mission  
statements for the ABCA  
should be reviewed again,

by 2011, to ensure they reflect the outcomes  
envisioned for our watersheds.

## What is our vision and mission for tomorrow?

The vision and mission statements for the  
next five to ten years might be modified to say  
that:

“... by 2020 ABCA plans to be the ‘Go-To’ Natural  
Champion for Watershed-Based Community  
Conservation and Environmental Services.”

The vision and mission  
statements for the  
Ausable Bayfield  
Conservation Authority  
(ABCA) have provided guidance  
in the past, and to the development  
of this business plan. However, it is  
time to undertake a thorough review  
with input from our partners.

Here are the vision and  
mission statements which currently  
guide the work of the ABCA:

## VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is one of clean and useable  
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.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide leadership and



The unique South Huron Trail Mobile allows  
people with limited mobility to enjoy  
nature – an example of natural health and  
human health working together.



The model articulated in ABCA’s  
vision and mission statements is  
one of working cooperatively to  
assist property owner efforts.



The Ausable Bayfield  
watersheds are home to  
important species at risk in  
need of protection.

# Historical Approach to Watershed Management

## Municipalities and Board of Directors

Our history is important to our future. The history of the people is as important as the history of what we did. The outcomes we measure don't often acknowledge the people who made the decisions and the people who carried out the programs and projects.

Conservation authorities are watershed and community-based organizations with a practice-based approach to integrated watershed management. This approach recognizes that ethical, scientific, and practical considerations are integrated in the watershed management process. A scientific basis is essential to improving decisions within a practice-based approach which is a progressive, evolutionary process to watershed management. An approach is required that recognizes that the human factor most directly affects the success of any watershed management system.

### Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Member Municipalities

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) grew out of the foresight of local municipalities who saw the need for an agency to prevent environmental degradation before it was



This tulip tree, near Sylvan, stands as a testament to the natural history of our watersheds.

too late.

This vision was in evidence in the words of the McGillivray Township Council that the "... ruthless elimination of flooded grassland (wetlands) and ... the uncontrolled cutting of timber is creating a condition which is beyond the power of this and other municipal councils to control ..."

A survey of the watershed was required, the council went on, "... to determine the conservation

measures necessary to ensure proper land use of this area."

We thank the ABCA member municipalities for their vision and commitment to conservation:

- Township of Adelaide Metcalfe
- Municipality of Bluewater
- Municipality of Central Huron
- Municipality of Huron East
- Municipality of Lambton Shores
- Township of Lucan Biddulph
- Municipality of Middlesex Centre
- Municipality of North Middlesex
- Township of Perth South
- Municipality of South Huron
- Township of Warwick
- Municipality of West Perth



At far left, historic photo of 1971 erosion control project on Parkhill Creek near Grand Bend. Centre, Parkhill Dam construction in 1967. At far right, the Parkhill Dam control structure as it appears today.



## Environmental Scan



In 2004, Conservation Ontario, on behalf of its 36 members, carried out an environmental scan to better understand the context in which the 36 conservation authorities will operate over the next 10 years. This scan was further augmented at a Business Priorities Workshop in April 2009.

The scan was a way to assess what the environmental needs of today and tomorrow are. Nine key themes were identified as potentially impacting on strategic planning and decision-making for the next five to ten years. For each theme there was an assessment of the factors driving the change; factors impeding the change and any uncertainties to the change.

The nine theme areas are:

- **Sustainability** – The triple bottom line means accountability for economic, social and environmental assets;
- **Challenge to Act in a Tighter Regulatory Environment** – This will require both human and financial resources;
- **Greater Accountability** – The public is demanding transparency and performance;
- **Valuing Natural Capital** – Attaching economic value that is measured and tracked;
- **Urban-Rural Tensions** – Different points of view, different policies and different priorities;
- **Competition for funding at all levels;**
- **Partnerships, sharing knowledge;**
- **Education** – A key driver for the changing of community and local



Community members volunteered their time, learned about water, and provided policy suggestions through drinking water source protection working groups.

government practices;

- **Identity** – Challenge in a crowded institutional environment

The most important message was the opportunity for conservation authorities to be creative and proactive in the current, murky institutional environment. The opportunity is there for conservation authorities to provide clear directions for integrated watershed community-based action. The need is also there for conservation authorities to provide clear documentation of the outcomes of their actions. Outcomes must achieve healthier watershed environments.

An environmental scan by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, Gord Miller, in his 2008-2009 *Annual Report*, suggests sustainability as building environmental resilience.

Through its board of directors, public meetings and events, its watershed community, and delivery of services, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) is getting a scan of what is happening in our watershed. A current example is drinking water source protection. This is a provincially-guided initiative, but it has also created a valuable opportunity to involve stakeholders directly in watershed planning at an unprecedented level.

It is important to listen to our partners as they provide us with an ongoing source of current information that can be used to adjust our strategic directions over time.





## Keeping up with / ahead of Environmental Issues

Science, technology and environmental issues have always changed. Today they do this at ever-increasing rates.

We cannot waste our energies solving the problems of yesterday. We must face the issues of today and anticipate the great questions of tomorrow.

The challenge for policy makers is to know the difference between the roles, mandates and responsibilities of different environmental agencies.

We need to do things right and we need to do the right things.

Collaborative sharing of the leadership is the most effective and efficient way of keeping up with, and ahead of, environmental issues.

Conservation authorities and non-governmental organizations have vital roles to play as caretakers.

In cooperation with other conservation authorities, and with other agencies and ministries, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) should become as current and knowledgeable as possible and consciously assess how it should adjust programs and services to prepare for the impacts of environmental changes and challenges.


The ABCA Board of Directors tackled one of the pressing issues of our day in 2007 by adopting *Preparing for Change in Ausable Bayfield Watersheds*, a position paper on climate change.

In its role as an environmental leader, the conservation authority should develop position statements on other environmental issues as they arise.

The ABCA cannot be an organizational



The public is active in watershed planning in many ABCA watershed communities.



island. The organization must work closely with member municipalities to share resources, knowledge, expertise and technology. Working effectively together will help achieve common goals, maximize efficiencies and obtain the healthiest watershed possible for

residents.

Political leaders sometimes favour programs, policies and projects that have short-term positive results. However, what we need more are long-term programs, policies and projects with the ability to adjust and make changes as these initiatives achieve longer-lasting results.

ABCA's private land stewardship program is such a long-term, successful service. We need to move forward with integrated watershed management in the same way.

### New ways of doing business

Demands for services require new ways of doing business.

Increased demand is another example where society (including baby boomers or 'zoomers') are looking for more opportunities for walking, hiking, biking, dirt biking and all-terrain vehicles. More use means more pressure on the environment. Conservation authorities need to understand and develop ways for increased user activities while protecting the key natural resources.

The old ways of doing business do not allow an organization to keep pace with the services and needs of watershed municipalities and residents – that's why it's crucial the ABCA keep at the forefront of environmental issues and collaborative management.

# Human Resources

## Training, valuing skilled staff important to our future

*“Coming together is a beginning;  
keeping together is progress;  
working together is success.”*

– Henry Ford

Leading a successful organization today means paying attention to staff details. Staff is the most valuable resource of any organization. Staff members who are competent, interested, flexible, dedicated, and in tune with the organization’s goals and objectives, bring value to the organization and to watershed residents.

The right team is efficient. The right team accomplishes more. A cohesive watershed team accomplishes more for partners, more for member municipalities, and more for landowners.

Staff of Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) are successful because there is a common vision. Team members work together, collaborate together and communicate together. ABCA’s staff – working with watershed residents and other partners – are enhancing the watershed’s natural resources and achieving some of the objectives set out in the *Watershed Management Strategy*.

Staff members are professional. They keep



Photo shows ABCA staff measuring snow pack levels.

current with new developments and the latest information. They attend workshops and conferences as part of their training plan. They are invited to share their expertise at local, regional, national and international levels.

In today’s working environment of highly-productive, effective and efficient staff an organization needs to have a plan that retains a strong knowledge base or reservoir and utilizes succession planning to show staff where they fit and their importance to the organization.

The *Human Resources Planning Framework* was approved by ABCA’s Board of Directors in 2008. That document outlines the Conservation Authority’s commitment to employment equity and retention of skilled staff. It sets out the organization’s values, objectives and current and projected composition. The document articulates expectations of staff, and expectations of the organization – like respect, integrity, accountability, communication, loyalty and leadership. The ABCA offers employees opportunities to accept more responsibility and new challenges, training to do their jobs and advance their careers, and a valued role to play in realizing its vision and mission.



Staff of Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority work in many areas, including research and monitoring; land use planning, regulation and mapping; watershed stewardship and conservation education.

Together with partners, they’re key to successful implementation of the *Watershed Management Strategy*.



## Core Conservation Values

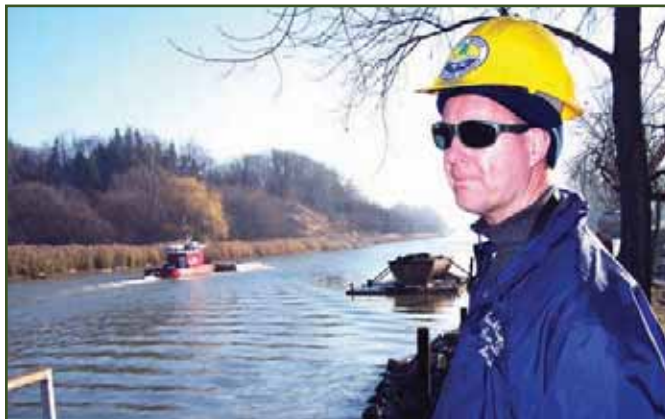
**A**usable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) has had very strong core conservation values since its inception. However, these values have not always been well-documented. Core values are key to any business plan, providing standards and directions for the organization, its members and the public. There will be more support and success in efforts to build better environmental knowledge if core values are clearly documented and available to partners and future partners.

Core values must be practiced through a sense of common responsibility within the membership and staff.

Organizational values outlined in the ABCA *Human Resources Planning Framework* (2008) include: respect, integrity, accountability, communication, loyalty and leadership.

Leadership, integrity, passion, innovation, teamwork, and customer service are the ways ABCA successfully achieves its core values.

It would hurt partnerships, funding, and the



Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority has identified respect, integrity, accountability, communication, loyalty and leadership as key to its organizational values.

success of the organization if ABCA did not live up to its core values.

It is for these, and many other reasons, that ABCA puts into practice these values in their work in the watershed.



Staff member (above) takes water sample at their job with ABCA.



Staff members work diligently to support public efforts to improve forest conditions, water quality and quantity.



Our watersheds are home to important species-at-risk.

# Strategic Directions

## Conservation Strategy 1993 - 2013



Traditionally, water management has been issue-driven, segmented among jurisdictions, and single-resource-based. This is difficult to manage, costly, and not particularly effective.

The *Conservation Strategy* (1993) is designed to be a pro-active, cooperative management and early-decision-making document.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) took a cooperative decision-making approach and had the public develop the strategy with input from watershed interest groups, agencies, general public and ministries.

The *Conservation Strategy* is an overall guiding document for the ABCA and all watershed stakeholders and partnering organizations. It identifies the preferred future state of the watersheds and the route which can be taken to reach that vision. It is intended to be used as a guide for the development of policies and programs over the twenty year period following its adoption.

The *Conservation Strategy* includes a vision and mission statement, environmental issues, goals, objectives and a series of recommended action plans which describe the specific tasks that need to be carried out to address the resource issues and achieve the desired future state for the watershed.

The strategy prioritizes the environmental issues and action plans.

The *Conservation Strategy* prioritized the environmental issues as follows:

- Water Quantity and Quality;
- Education;



Education is one of the most effective ways to ensure the generation of tomorrow will adopt good stewardship.

- Soil Quality;
- Natural Areas;
- Planning;
- Sustainable Management;
- Promotion of Environmentally-Wise Land Use Practices.

The public participation in the development of the strategy has given resilience to the document. The watershed community has demonstrated greater support for the document because they played such a leading role in its creation. ABCA is due to review and update the *Conservation Strategy*.

Our partners, and the public, will be important contributors to this review.



Community members have an important role in development of strategic conservation efforts.



Improving water quality and quantity, conservation education, and best management are among *Conservation Strategy* priorities.

# Strategic Directions

## Watershed Management Strategy 1995 - 2005

The *Watershed Management Strategy* (WMS, 1996) geographically targets the *Conservation Strategy* recommendations within the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) watersheds by translating the watershed vision into quantifiable goals.

WMS further interprets the watershed ecosystem and analyses the distribution of stresses to the ecosystem associated with each *Conservation Strategy* issue. Thirty-six subwatersheds were identified using stream order and common features. Priorities are listed for each issue and for each subwatershed.

The WMS is used by the ABCA to set program priorities to realize the best investment of financial and staff resources. The format used also enables ABCA to help municipalities with their land-use planning decisions by identifying natural heritage features in a watershed perspective.

A report card system has been developed and used as an evaluation tool and as a means of fine-



*Watershed Report Cards* offer information and improvement strategies.

tuning to ensure the environmental issues, goals and action plans remain relevant to watershed conditions.

The *Report Card* for Ausable Bayfield watersheds was completed in 2006 and a second report card is completed in 2011.

The WMS provides a proactive, strategic approach and guidance to implementation of many of the *Comprehensive Set of Policy Statements* (1995) related to natural heritage, hazards and environmental protection (Goal A).

The *Watershed Management Strategy* indirectly addressed integrated watershed management. It is time for the ABCA to take the current practice of individual, specific, issue-based actions and develop an *Integrated Watershed Management Plan* to update the *Watershed Management Strategy*.

An *Integrated Watershed Management Plan* will identify a local definition for integrated watershed management and how it will be implemented here.



The Old Ausable Channel Long-Term Management Plan is an example of communities planning at the local watershed scale to preserve water quality and quantity. Bayfield North and Port Franks are other recent examples.







## Financial Management

### *What are the financial costs if the business of conservation doesn't happen?*

One could ask, “What would our watershed look like if there had never been a conservation authority?”

- How many fewer trees would there be?
- How much more soil would have been eroded off the land and into our water as sediment?
- How many fewer wetlands would there be?  
(... and how much less filtration of our water, and how much less water storage on our landscape?)
- How much more damage would there have been if homes had been built in floodplains?  
(... and how many lives would have been put at risk?)
- How much less would children have known about their watershed?
- How many beaches would be unswimmable?
- How much more stressed would water resources be?
- How many fewer species would there be?
- How healthy would our watershed be?
- Would the quality of our air be poorer?
- How many fewer opportunities to appreciate nature would there be?

We can be thankful to know how much healthier our watershed is today because municipalities and the Province of Ontario had the vision to create Conservation Authorities.

We must also seize the opportunity to plan for the future to continue fulfilling our mandate and ensuring our watersheds become even healthier



Above, home seen along Ausable River during high waters. Keeping homes out of floodplains is one of the ways conservation authorities can help to protect life and property.

in the future.

There are many approaches to financial management.

What does fiscal responsibility mean? The ratepayer doesn't like higher taxes but there is also a call for more and better services.

What makes good business sense? What is the economic value of wetlands, clean water and a healthy

environment? Put a different way, how much do wetlands, clean water and a healthy environment contribute to a local economy?

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) has always had good accounting procedures to ensure all the money is accounted for, that bills are paid on time and an audit is conducted to ensure the highest standards of accountability are observed. This is in place at ABCA and is very important to the overall integrity and trust residents place in this organization.

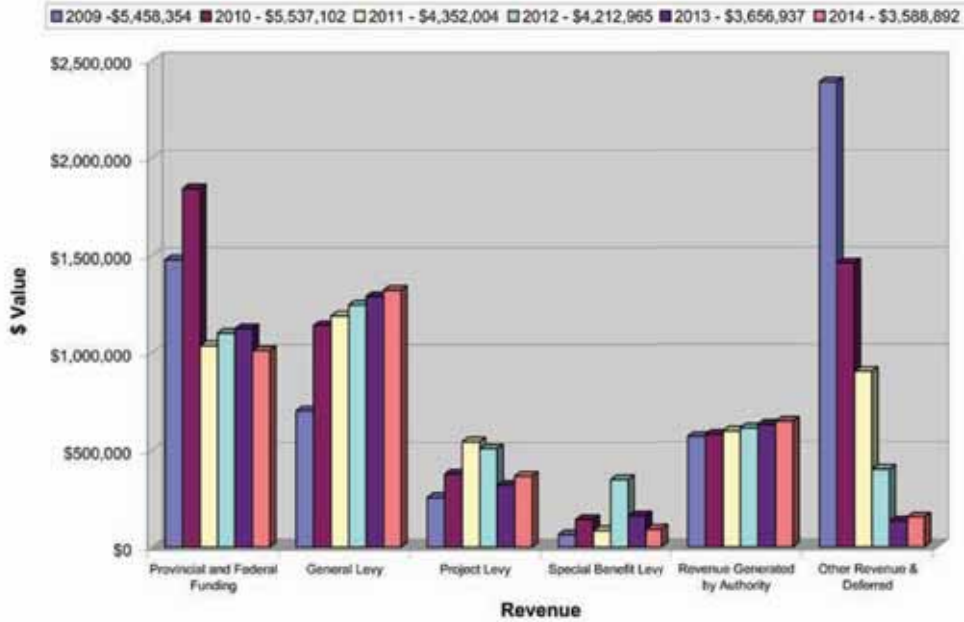
Financial management also includes the ability to provide adequate resources to deliver programs, projects and services in an efficient manner. Audited financial statements are available since 1946. Municipal levies are a key source of funding with which ABCA leverages millions of dollars from other sources for local environmental projects. It is important that ABCA retains the capacity to successfully leverage funds to accomplish more with resources. ABCA must also deal with ever-increasing costs related to legislated matters (such as health and safety compliance, accessibility, amortization of tangible capital assets on the income statement and access to information).

# Financial Management

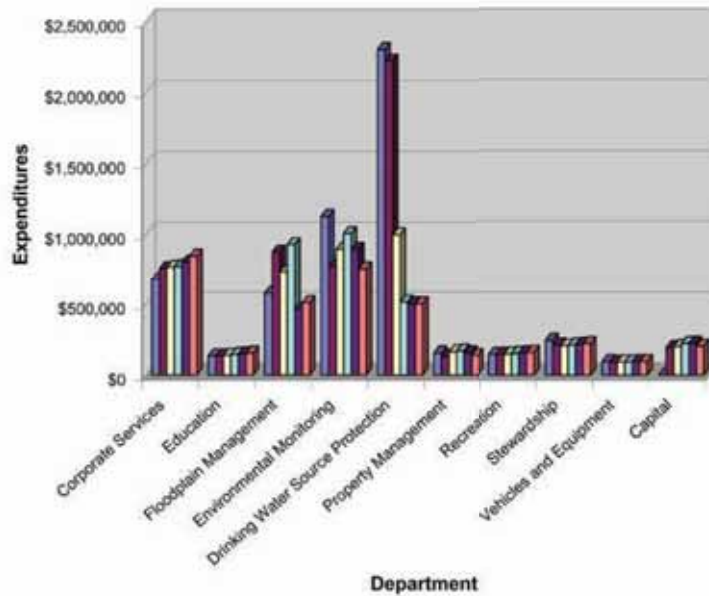
In 2009 a five-year budgeting plan was introduced:



**Projected Revenue - 5 Year**



**Projected Expenditures - 5 Year**



2009 - \$5,458,354 2010 - \$5,537,102 2011 - \$4,352,004 2012 - \$4,212,965 2013 - \$3,656,937 2014 - \$3,588,892

## Business Functions

Based on the results of the *Water Resources Information Project*, conservation authorities have six key water business functions:

- Protect life and property from flood and erosion (*water quantity*).
- Encourage sustainable water supply (*drinking water source protection*).
- Inventory and monitor water quality; assess and report on water conditions (*environmental monitoring*).
- Protect and enhance water quality (*conservation services and private land stewardship*).
- Provide recreation/quality of life opportunities (*property management*).
- Educate future generations and communicate with public and landowners to engage watershed residents in watershed health.

Management on a watershed basis, cooperatively with the public and partners, is key to achieving the desired outcomes for the watershed.



Buffer plantings – like this one along the Ausable River – can help keep soil on land and out of water.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) has a multi-faceted role in delivering integrated watershed management for healthy watersheds.

ABCA is guided by the *Conservation Authorities Act* to protect life and property through an effective regulations program and flood-related program.

ABCA is guided by the recommendations of the *Conservation Strategy* to protect and

enhance water quality and quantity.

ABCA is guided by position statements to help create, with landowners, strong and resilient watersheds.

We are guided by our motto to ‘*Build Environmental Conscience*’ and, beyond that, to foster positive environmental action on the watershed landscape.

We have many important roles to play.

- We are in the water business.
- We are in the watershed management business.
- We are in the integrated watershed management business.

We need to develop a road map to achieving watershed resiliency.



Planting trees, by hand and by machine, helps improve forest conditions in the watershed.



Staff members take water quality samples near Zurich during World Water Quality Monitoring Day.



There are 14 provincial groundwater monitoring network wells in the watershed.

# New Directions

## Integrated Watershed Management



Creating a healthier environmental future requires effective decision-making using the watershed as the ideal ecological focus.

Achieving success means acknowledging there are many players who need to work together and it is less important who gets credit than it is to realize common goals.

Integrated watershed management is the way of the future – conservation authorities, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, landowners and watershed communities marching forward together for the common good.

Integrated watershed management incorporates not just environmental needs but social and economic realities of how to maintain clean and useable watersheds.

Integrated watershed management requires the delineation of our priorities and goals.

If conservation authorities seek to build environmental conscience, improve forest conditions, protect water quality, protect life and property and to foster positive actions – we must also have strategies for success and monitoring to keep track of outcomes and success.

Landowners, the broader public and other partners are key participants in that management model and engagement processes need to be selected based on the value the public sees in them.



Conservation authorities must work effectively with governments, agencies, landowners and other partners.



The Bayfield North Watersheds is an example of a community taking action to protect the environment.

Staff from different organizations need to share resources and we must think long and hard about which organizations are best equipped to handle which tasks. Sharing of information and expertise will always be a priority.

Many viewpoints need to be considered. Integrated watershed management provides a framework to improve the planet in which we live – making global change through local action.

One definition of integrated watershed management says that it is “. . . the practice of making decisions and taking actions while considering multiple viewpoints of how water should be managed.” The decision-making process involves many participants.

The involvement of multiple partners may make decision-making more complex and challenging but, ultimately, we can better achieve our goals of healthier and more resilient watersheds with better forest conditions, protected and improved water quality, and enhanced environmental conscience and action.

Integrated watershed management requires our current tools and new tools as well. Drinking water source protection of the vulnerable areas around municipal wells and intakes is one of those tools to be integrated into the wider watershed management model – but there are other tools as well. Some need to be shared and some have yet to be developed.



## New Directions

### Research, Information Management and Information Communication

Conservation authorities are very good at data collection. We are getting better at data storage and data analysis. We need to do a better job of reporting and sharing it with others.

This business plan, and *Reference Book* [in development], is a major step forward in making the information resources we have available for municipalities, board directors, public and staff. This plan also makes clear how the existing foundation of knowledge and research will be woven together with current strategic efforts to map out our course for the future.

#### What does ABCA need to do better?

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) should have a statement and direction that it will consult with the public on a periodic basis (three to five years) as a way of 'ground-truthing' for environmental issues and to find out how the public sees our services.

After more than 60 years of conservation



Two-way communication between ABCA and the public is key to achieving positive actions.

service delivery, and creation and/or delivery of hundreds of programs and projects, ABCA has collected a lot of information. It is critical that an information management system be put in place and maintained so public data can be used by ABCA and made available to the member municipalities and the general public.

We need to encourage all governments to share that information which is public, maintain high standards for the information and provide to each other at no cost. Drinking water source protection planning, and the associated expansion of watershed knowledge that has created, needs to be part of the ABCA's plans to better communicate our knowledge for the public benefit.

The public already sees ABCA as a 'go-to' organization for delivery of tree planting services, stewardship programs and more – we must also make it an organization to which the public and other agencies turn for information about watershed resources.

### Position Statements

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority should continue developing strategic direction for all current aspects of managing and delivery of its programs and projects.

An example of ABCA responding to pressing issues was the adoption of a position statement on the issues of climate change, climate variability and adaptation.

Position statements should be considered for all major issues.

Additional statements and strategies should be prepared as new issues develop. These statements and directions should be available as single statements or directions and/or as a collective document.



Flooding – like photo of Kading Drain flooding on Highway 21, above – shows that extremes happen and adaptation is required.

# Recommendations, Summary and Performance Measures



**W**e have developed this business plan to articulate our directions for the next ten years.

This document draws together the strength of vision, research and watershed community foundation that has been constructed over more than sixty years, with the strength of the human resources currently in place.



Our vision of a greener future moves us forward together.

We need to measure outputs along the way but, more importantly, we must determine that real and meaningful outcomes have been achieved. We need to apply measurement tools such as those outlined in the *Watershed Report Cards* and the *Land Securement Plan*.

We need to measure environmental outcomes and we need to gauge the involvement of the watershed community. Monitoring performance not only means achieving success by our report card but by the public's evaluation of our work. Updating the *Conservation Strategy* is one way to monitor that public evaluation of our successes and our avenues for improvement.

What does success look like?

***Environmental Conscience  
+ Environmental Action  
+ Integrated Management Solutions  
= A Healthier Watershed***

ABCA has a plan for the future. The conservation authority will work with municipal, provincial, federal and other partners together to implement the plan, and review the plan.

This business plan is a road map or, perhaps, an atlas – that shows us the direction we are headed but also provides us information on the existing research which will help guide us to a healthier watershed future.

Improved forest conditions, protection and enhancement of water quality and quantity, protection of life and property through an effective regulations program, building environmental conscience and positive environmental action – these are just some of the many goals we have to accomplish.

We will travel down several paths to arrive at our destination, and we will have many fellow travellers on our journey, yet all our paths will converge in one trail forward to a stronger, more resilient watershed.

**In summary,  
our recommendations are:**

- Every five years the business plan will be reviewed.
- Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) will develop position statements on major issues for the future.

**Ausable Bayfield**

**Conservation Authority will:**

- Review its vision and mission.
- Define its core values.
- Measure its performance based on building of environmental conscience and work alongside landowners in the creation of positive environmental change on the watershed landscape.
- Continue to measure outputs and increasingly measure outcomes.
- Move forward with an *Integrated Watershed Management Plan*.
- Continue to be a leader in the environmental field.
- Move to an increasingly shared decision-making and shared leadership model with its partners and stakeholders.
- Strongly support the need to recognize the economic value of the environment.
- Continue to manage its staff as its most valued resource.
- Maintain a five-year financial plan annually.





**A Ten-Year Business Plan 2010 - 2020**  
*Towards a Healthier Watershed*  
**Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority**  
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