

# Technical support, funds help you restore wetlands

## Wetlands are to be restored, enhanced in Huron, Middlesex counties

Huron and Middlesex Counties were once home to many significant wetlands. Clearing of forested land and drainage of wetlands since the 1800s changed the local landscape. Now, only two to three per cent of the land base in those counties is in wetlands.

A recent mapping initiative has indicated that 10 to 15 per cent of the area could support wetlands.

### What are wetlands?

They are areas that are seasonally or permanently wet with poor draining soils and water-loving plants.

Options may exist for wetland restoration on marginal lands or enhancement to existing wetlands that can be carried out with little or no reduction in productive land available for cultivation.

Technical advice and financial assistance is available to landowners interested in investigating opportunities for wetland restoration on their property. This has been made available through the Healthy Headwaters Wetlands Initiative, a partnership between the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, Huron Stewardship Council, Middlesex Stewardship Council, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Wetland restoration to protect wildlife habitat is also being made possible through the Government of



Wetlands are 'nature's reservoir' helping water quality and quantity. Thanks to restoration and enhancement partnerships in the watershed, more of these vital watershed systems can be created and preserved with your participation.

Canada Habitat Stewardship Program.

If you have questions, comments, would like to share your knowledge of local wetlands, or are interested in investigating opportunities for wetland restoration and enhancement on your property, please contact Angela Van

Niekerk, Wetlands Specialist, at **519-235-2610**, ext. 246 or toll-free **1-888-286-2610** or e-mail [avanniekerk@abca.on.ca](mailto:avanniekerk@abca.on.ca).

For more information, visit [abca.on.ca](http://abca.on.ca), click on 'Programs,' then click on 'Wetlands.'

### Wetlands are 'Nature's Reservoir'

Wetlands are 'nature's reservoir' – helping preserve water quality, water quantity and animal habitat. Wetlands store water and hold it back to limit impacts of flooding. While that water is retained, its velocity is reduced, groundwater is recharged and sediment and pollutants settle out – before that water reaches our rivers, lakes and our drinking water. There are currently several programs through the ABCA, to help you enhance and restore wetlands and increase local storage capacity.

Water storage slows down heavy surface water flows, leading to less soil erosion. Trees and vegetation along a wetland can filter sediment and nutrients. Damage from snowmelt and spring flooding may be reduced with an increase in wetlands and water retention areas in the watershed.

Only two per cent of the Ausable River landscape has wetlands. The re-establishment of wetlands can help reduce sediment and nutrients.

## Habitat Stewardship Program

### Helping you protect species at risk

There's more than meets the eye in the Ausable River.

It casually winds through some of Canada's best farmland and was the focal point of many towns and villages during settlement. If you look closely, you'll discover a highly diverse aquatic community that has historically supported more than 83 fish species, 25 species of freshwater mussels and more than 21 reptile species. This variety of aquatic life makes the Ausable River one of the richest watersheds of its size in Canada.

Several species found in the Ausable River are identified as 'species at risk.' This means the population is in danger of disappearing from Canada.

But, why should we care? All aquatic life – fish, mussels, reptiles – are important and if one disappears, it can have a ripple effect on other species. It's also a warning sign because typically these species are particularly sensitive to changes in the environment. They require a healthy environment such as clean water and adequate habitat to survive. "If we can provide the right conditions for these sensitive species, we can provide the right conditions for other fish, as well as people," explains Kate Monk, ABCA Stewardship and Conservation Lands Supervisor.

Many people are allowing their actions to speak for them. They show



Canada's HSP program is help you protect species at risk locally.

they care by planting trees along rivers and streams to reduce soil erosion and to shade the water, by keeping cattle out of watercourses, by keeping soil on their fields and by not driving their all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) through rivers. More than 80 on-the-ground stewardship projects have been funded in the Ausable River watershed since 2003 with funding from the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, improving 5,450 hectares of land. This includes 44 tree planting projects, 14 livestock fencing projects and 20 manure or conservation tillage equipment modifications.

The ABCA has funding available for more projects and encourages you to call to see how you can help these special species.

Visit [abca.on.ca](http://abca.on.ca) online for information or call **519-235-2610** or toll-free **1-888-286-2610**.

## Watershed Report Cards

### What can you do in your watershed?

Would your local watershed get a 'B' for water quality, or a 'C' for forest health?

Visit [abca.on.ca](http://abca.on.ca) to see the report card for your watershed and what you can do to improve the grade.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Watershed Report Cards summarizes the state of the water quality and forest conditions for 16 watersheds that drain into the south-east shore of Lake Huron. The A, B, C and D grades may capture our attention but the real value of the Watershed Report Card is to provide recommendations on how to improve our local environment.

Improving water quality and local forest conditions 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.

The ABCA will next issue watershed report cards in the year 2012. In the meantime, ABCA staff continue monitoring programs.

## Noted native son to return to watershed

The historic 20th Anniversary Conservation Dinner on **April 16** will feature an equally historic homecoming – the return of Exeter native and business leader John A. MacNaughton as special guest at the gala charitable event. The Order of Canada recipient is the son of the late Charles S. MacNaughton, whose legacy is remembered in the name of The MacNaughton-Morrison Section of the South Huron Trail.

John MacNaughton has served at the highest levels of business, public service and volunteer leadership in Canada. For more information visit [conservationdinner.com](http://conservationdinner.com)

### What's Inside

- Page 2** Local people actively involved in watershed plans
- Page 2** Foundation work
- Page 3** Conservation Education opportunities
- Page 3** Successful online mapping project
- Page 4** Grants available
- Page 4** Notice re: ATVs

## Local people highly involved in planning for healthy watersheds

### Bayfield North Watersheds, Old Ausable Channel among active communities

Local people have become increasingly aware of environmental issues and want to know what they can do to improve the environment – and they are active in local planning to make improvements happen.

Property owners in the Ausable, Bayfield and smaller Lake Huron tributaries have been working with Healthy Watersheds staff from the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) to take action and improve their local watercourses

The Bayfield North Watersheds Plan will describe the natural and human geography of the area north of Bayfield. Over the past year, community residents have shared their interests and identified issues through a series of workshops and meetings.

Overall, the community is keen to enhance the natural areas (including water quality in Lake Huron) but recognize that a balance is necessary in this area that is both rich in natural heritage and attractive to development.



The plan will recommend approaches and actions that will help to ensure that natural features are protected and the watershed is enhanced. The planning committee held several events in 2008, including summer open houses, a woodlot management tour, a beach clean-up, and a Rural Landowner Stewardship Guide workshop.

Planned for 2009 are an Earth Day clean-up event, summer open houses to present the draft plan to the community, and another beach clean-up. It is clear from the community concerns about water quality and protection of the natural environment that more information and assistance with projects is important



Improving our environment on a broader scale can begin effectively by starting locally with planning and implementation at the community watershed scale. Local residents have been actively planning in Bayfield North Watersheds and the Old Ausable River Channel area near Grand Bend. A Port Franks initiative is now being considered using the same successful model.

to the local residents.

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. In 2006, the ABCA and the Grand Bend community began work on the initial stages of developing a management plan for the OAC. The OAC management plan document was completed in 2007 thanks to the assistance and dedication of this stakeholder committee.

The long-term (10 to 20 years) management plan for the OAC was necessary in order to best benefit the river's ecosystem and the surrounding community. The management plan provides a unified vision for management of this unique watershed across the

different stakeholder groups. The plan:

- Identifies long-term directions and actions;
- Identifies education, public information and recreation opportunities;
- Provides guidelines for adjacent land use activities;
- Promotes protection and conservation of significant species and habitat.

The ABCA and partners propose to use the approach taken to develop the OAC Management Plan to develop a Port Franks Management Strategy in 2009. The Port Franks area is home to many species at risk and a community that is very interested in protecting its natural environment.

Contact us to find out how you can help.

## Leave a local legacy

### Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation was incorporated in 1974 as a registered, charitable, non-profit organization whose aim is to promote conservation projects in the Ausable Bayfield watershed.

As such, the Foundation is a self-governing body with a membership comprised of volunteer watershed residents governed by nine Board of Directors.

They are:

Norm MacPherson – *Chair*  
Peter Darbishire  
Ted Jones  
David McClure  
Ernie Miatello  
Bob Norris  
Teresa Ondrejicka  
Roger Lewington  
John Walsh  
Bev Brown – *Treasurer*  
Judith Parker – *Secretary*  
Sharon Pavkeje  
– *Foundation Assistant*  
Tom Prout,  
– *ABCA General Manager and Secretary Treasurer*

One of the events held each year is the Conservation Dinner which supports the work of the Foundation as well as conservation projects of the Exeter Lions Club. The Conservation Dinner takes place on **Thursday, April 16, 2009**. For information visit:

[conservationdinner.com](http://conservationdinner.com)

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation



The Conservation Dinner is one way to support watershed conservation projects. Another way is 'Leaving a Local Legacy' through a donation or bequest.

Foundation also improves watershed and human health through the support of individuals, groups and corporations who are interested in contributing toward special conservation projects that will benefit the residents of the watershed.

Donations to the Foundation are greatly appreciated and acknowledged by a charitable receipt.

For information on how to support her work of the Foundation visit [abca.on.ca](http://abca.on.ca) and click on 'Foundation' or e-mail [info@abca.on.ca](mailto:info@abca.on.ca)

## Board members assist your watershed

### Municipalities partners in local conservation

Nine individuals, appointed by 12 member municipalities, form the Board of Directors for the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA).

These dedicated and knowledgeable local leaders have a responsibility to set policies, budgets and programs that maintain and improve the health of watershed resources.

Lawrence McLachlan was re-elected Chair and Jim Ginn was re-elected Vice Chair of the board at the local agency's recent annual meeting. Two new directors were appointed at the annual meeting:

- David Bolton now represents Adelaide Metcalfe and Middlesex Centre.
- Mark Simpson now represents Lambton Shores and Warwick.

An important role of a director is to be a positive voice in the watershed community. These nine individuals represent the best of conservation in the community, at council meetings and at community functions.

The members of the ABCA Board of Directors are:

#### Board of Directors

Lawrence McLachlan – *Chair*  
(North Middlesex)  
Jim Ginn – *Vice Chair*  
(Central Huron)  
Bill Siemon  
(Huron East)  
David Bolton  
(Adelaide Metcalfe, Middlesex Centre)  
George Irvin  
(Bluewater)  
Dave Frayne  
(South Huron, Perth South)  
Bob Norris  
(West Perth)  
Paul Hodgins  
(Lucan Biddulph)  
Mark Simpson  
(Lambton Shores, Warwick)

Lawrence McLachlan, Chair of the ABCA, extends his thanks to board members who have recently completed their terms. "I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the board members. Specifically, I would like to thank Bill Weber for his years of service as Lambton Shores and Warwick representative and Adrian de Bruyn for his years of service on behalf of Adelaide Metcalfe and Middlesex Centre."

The ABCA Board of Directors is hosting an awards evening on Thursday, March 19 for valued partners. That evening they will present the Conservationist of the Year Award. This year's theme is enhancing wetlands.



# Your Watershed

Conservation Education • Watershed Stewardship • Land Use Planning, Regulation and Mapping • Research and Monitoring



CAMAPS.CA

## View aerial maps on your computer ABCA part of six-CA online mapping portal

Some of your Conservation Authority's sophisticated technological mapping and database work is now available right from your home computer through a new online portal at:

[camaps.ca](http://camaps.ca)

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) is one of six Conservation Authorities in Ontario that has taken part in this pilot project. Phase 2 of the project saw a change of technologies to allow for a new and efficient data distribution mechanism to partners in the project.

This operational Internet site has been very successful since its beginning last year. The mapping pilot project is supported by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and its Land Information Ontario initiative.

Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, supports many programs and projects at the 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.

GIS staff at the ABCA are involved in creating databases, linking databases to a spatial layer, data management

(aggregation, changing file formats, and more), map creation, and more complex analysis involving queries, map algebra, or modeling.

Staff are also involved in acquiring data such as aerial photography or vector (line, polygon, and point) sets.

The ABCA has used its technological and mapping know-how for many other projects including:

- High-resolution aerial photography.
- Three-dimensional shoreline models to better understand and identify erosion and flood-prone areas.
- Updates to Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) and Regulations mapping.

GIS staff work with partners to provide information and input into projects.

This past year included working with Ducks Unlimited to create a Waterfowl Productivity Model for the Ausable Bayfield watershed.

Consultants continue to come to the ABCA for aerial photography and data to complete projects for both the municipalities and for the private sector.

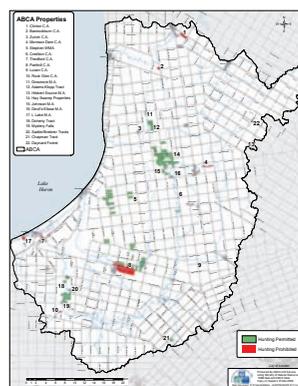
## Fostering natural, human health ABCA is Ontario's first Conservation Authority

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) is an independent, corporate body established under the Conservation Authorities Act.

This local agency is located in southwestern Ontario bordering the shores of Lake Huron and carries the banner of being the first of 36 conservation authorities formed across Ontario.

In 1946 the municipalities within the Ausable River watershed formed the Ausable River Conservation Authority to deal with serious problems of local flooding, soil erosion, water supply and water quality. In 1972 the jurisdiction was enlarged to include the Bayfield River drainage basin and our name was changed to Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority.

The ABCA encompasses the drainage basins of the Ausable River, Bayfield River, Parkhill Creek and the gullies between Bayfield and Grand



Bend draining directly to Lake Huron. The 2,440 square kilometre area of jurisdiction can be classified as largely rural with a population of 45,000.

### ABCA 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.

### ABCA Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide leadership and management, in cooperation with the community, to maintain and enhance the watershed resources now and in the future.

*The ABCA may soon take a renewed look at the Conservation Strategy developed with community involvement more than 15 years ago. Your contributions to this process will be welcome.*

For rules and requirements for obtaining hunting passes, for specified hunting areas, please visit [abca.on.ca](http://abca.on.ca), e-mail [info@abca.on.ca](mailto:info@abca.on.ca) or phone 519-235-2610 or toll-free 1-888-286-2610. Remember, **passes are required** and hunting is *not* permitted in some areas.

## Children enjoy active education Outdoor conservation at schools, other sites

Are you a teacher, parent or watershed resident concerned about the environment?

Are you looking for seasonally appropriate outdoor activities for you, your group or your students?

Look no further.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) delivers captivating and memorable experiences for the public and students alike while offering hands-on nature explorations and lessons, hikes and presentations.

We offer:

- Flexible programming to meet your curriculum expectations and budget.
- Knowledgeable staff who are committed to excellence in outdoor education.
- Safe learning environments at one of our ABCA Conservation Lands, in your classroom or potentially at your location.

Outdoor education programs improve a child's developmental growth and well-being. Education programs and special events relate classroom curriculum to real-life situations, promote character education and lifelong physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Outdoor Education exposes people to the natural environment in ways that develop powerful, knowledgeable and lifelong connections essential for a healthy and sustainable future for the natural environment and communities in the Ausable Bayfield watershed.

Are you looking for a program for

your school, community group or a guest speaker? For more information or to book a program call 519-235-2610 or toll-free 1-888-286-2610.

### Special Thanks:

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority would like to recognize the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation which supports conservation education programs within the watershed. Each year, the Foundation donates \$1 for every participant who attended an education program or event. Thank you!

### Coming Events

- March 17, 19** March Break Day Camps
- March 19** Conservationist of the Year
- April 16** Conservation Dinner
- April 22** Earth Day
- May 2** Morrison Dam Fishing Derby
- May 5** Seniors' Walk & Talk
- July** Summer Nature Day Camps
- July 4** Trails Open
- August** Summer Nature Day Camps
- August 11** Seniors' Walk & Talk
- Sept. 20** Commemorative Woods (MDCA)
- October 4** Bannockburn Fall Hike
- October 13** Seniors' Walk & Talk
- November 7** Owl Prowl

## ABCA provides flood information Water levels are monitored, data is collected

### Water Level and Stream Flow Monitoring

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), in cooperation with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and Environment Canada, maintains and operates a data collection network within its watershed area.

This network provides watershed municipalities and residents with advance warning of life-threatening flood events in the watershed. This monitoring network also provides information on low water conditions, groundwater / surface water interactions and the relationship of stream flow to aquatic health.

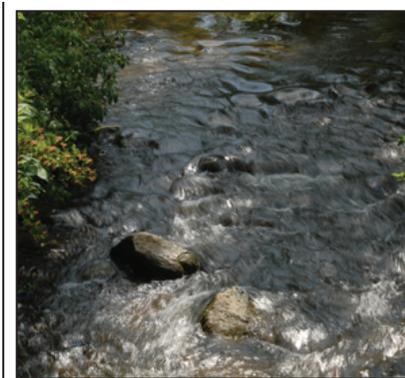
The data collection network allows staff to monitor watershed conditions including water levels and precipitation on the major channels of the Ausable River, Bayfield River and Parkhill Creek watersheds.

Computerized monitoring systems, in the field, transmit information by telephone line directly to the office in Exeter.

With funding support from the MNR, maintenance of the streamflow monitoring stations is shared by ABCA and Environment Canada staff.

In addition to the surface flow and precipitation networks, groundwater levels in some of the significant groundwater aquifers in the watershed are currently being monitored.

This monitoring is possible through a partnership between the ABCA and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment



The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, in cooperation with funding partners, collects extensive data related to stream flow.

(MOE).

The ABCA currently has 14 active groundwater monitoring wells throughout the watershed, five (5) bedrock wells and nine (9) wells drilled into the overburden.

Hourly groundwater level data has been logged for more than six (6) years in some of the earliest wells. Based on the program's short period of record, groundwater levels are trending upwards from where they were in 2002.

Annual cycles in groundwater levels are also consistent, highlighting the critical annual recharge periods of fall and spring.

The importance of this data is not limited in a groundwater sense, but plays an important role in both the drought and low water response programs and the flood forecasting and warning network at the ABCA.



# Your Watershed

Conservation Education • Watershed Stewardship • Land Use Planning, Regulation and Mapping • Research and Monitoring



## Landowners can obtain funding Call ABCA for support, grant information

Last year, the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) connected more than 100 landowners with funding to complete environmental improvement projects.

“Our role is to secure funding from various agencies and government ministries and distribute it to landowners who want to do projects to protect the environment,” said Kate Monk, Stewardship and Conservation Lands Supervisor.

Rather than people needing to contact numerous agencies for funding, the ABCA can find the best match.

“If people have an environmental issue they’d like to address, we recommend they call us. We can visit the property and give one-on-one service,” Monk said. “We have experience from many farms and properties.”

Funding is available to protect and improve surface water, groundwater, soil and species at risk. It doesn’t matter if people live in the country or in town.

Tree planting is one of the most popular stewardship programs with more than five (5) million trees planted in the watersheds over the past several decades. Grants can cover many of the costs of planting trees along rivers and streams or on hilly land or along field edges.



It’s sometimes hard to keep track of all the funding programs that are available – ABCA staff can help you find out if your project is eligible for grants. Phone to find out more.

Stewardship projects don’t just benefit the natural environment – they also benefit people and their properties. Residents are increasingly finding that being green also helps the bottom line of their farming operation, increases property values and protects family and herd health.

“This is especially true of practices that keep soil on farm fields. Crops can’t grow without good soil,” Monk said. “And protecting your well and source of drinking water has a direct benefit to your family’s health.”

To learn about grants and ways to improve your property, call the ABCA or check the web site at [abca.on.ca](http://abca.on.ca) or phone 519-235-2610.

## Assessing Our Drinking Water Sources Report over next year, Plans over next three years

Over the coming year or so, the local Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Region will assess the activities that may exist on properties in key vulnerable areas.

The local Source Protection Region will prepare an assessment of properties in some of the most vulnerable areas to determine if they pose a significant risk to local drinking water sources.

It is expected most properties will *not* be deemed to be significant drinking water threats. However, if you are located in one of these vulnerable areas, you are encouraged to find out more about the Assessment Report being prepared over the coming year and the Source Protection Plans being prepared over the coming three years.

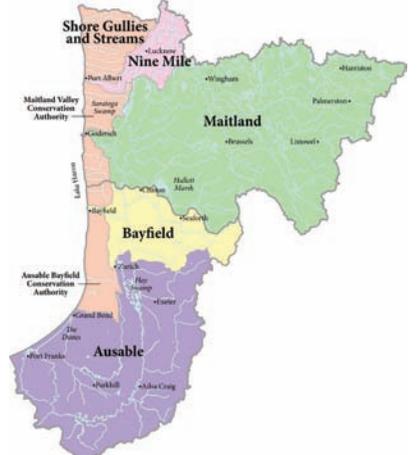
Drinking Water Source Protection begins with voluntary initiatives by property owners in vulnerable areas – and financial assistance is available for best management practices by those closest to municipal wells and intakes.

It is most likely your property will *not* be affected by Source Protection Planning under the *Clean Water Act, 2006*. Most properties are outside the most vulnerable areas. However, Source Protection Plans developed over the next three years will make recommendations about some properties in vulnerable areas.

Municipalities in the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection



Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Region



Region have passed resolutions which will allow funding for voluntary projects, through the Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program (ODWSP), to be provided to four times as many homes, farms, businesses or municipal properties. For information on the planning process or funding opportunities phone:

519-235-2610

or

1-888-286-2610

You are also invited to get more information online at our local web site links at:

[sourcewaterinfo.on.ca](http://sourcewaterinfo.on.ca)  
[sourceprotectionstewardship.on.ca](http://sourceprotectionstewardship.on.ca)

## Agency provides technical information ABCA reviews help to protect life, property

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) is the provincially delegated agency providing natural hazard comments to landowners and municipalities.

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

Through the ABCA Planning and Regulations program, the Conservation Authority helps prevent future risks to life and property, and helps to protect the interests, and limit the liability of, landowners.

The ABCA is also a key agency providing Natural Heritage (or environmental) advice to landowners and municipalities. Development must take into account the need to protect natural areas and those areas which provide a source for clean ground and surface water.

In recent years there has been an increased interest in building or site alteration along Lake Huron – specifically near and over the top of



the bluff and down the slope along the beach. It should be noted that even with current reduced water levels, this area continues to be hazardous and is regulated by the ABCA. Development and site alteration in these areas continues to be at risk due to natural lake processes.

You should contact your Conservation Authority prior to undertaking any such works in these areas as they may require a permit from the ABCA – including for small accessory structures.

Residents and contractors should call the Conservation Authority to discuss their proposals before initiating work. Not only may you need a permit for this work but the Conservation Authority can also provide important technical information and advice on how to address the risks posed by naturally hazardous areas.

For more information visit the ABCA online at [abca.on.ca](http://abca.on.ca) or phone 519-235-2610 or toll-free 1-888-286-2610 or e-mail [info@abca.on.ca](mailto:info@abca.on.ca)

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## Public Notice Regarding Off-Road Vehicle Use on Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Lands

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) owns more than 9,500 acres of environmentally-significant lands for the purpose of protecting river valleys, wetlands and forests. These islands of green also provide fish and wildlife habitat, and areas for recreation, education and scientific research. Citizens are welcome to use ABCA properties for nature appreciation that does not damage the environment.

The Conservation Authority is an independent corporation and its property is not Crown Land. It is classified as private land and, as such, the ABCA identifies permitted and prohibited uses.

Off-road vehicles are prohibited on ABCA lands unless a special agreement is in place with the ABCA. This includes all-terrain vehicles, off-road motorcycles, snowmobiles and trucks. Members of the Pineridge Snowmobile Club, Strathroy Sno Blizzards Snowmobile Club and the Ausable River Riders Club may use specific properties through agreements with the ABCA. These clubs maintain the trails to provide safe riding experiences and mitigate environmental damages. Members must follow a code of conduct in order to maintain the privilege of using ABCA lands.

Members of the public engaging in prohibited activities on ABCA lands can be charged under the Trespass to Property Act or Conservation Authorities Act.

Please visit the ABCA web site at [abca.on.ca](http://abca.on.ca) for information on conservation lands, permitted activities and trail maps.