

Annual Report 2015



AUSABLE BAYFIELD
CONSERVATION

CREATING AWARENESS | TAKING ACTION

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Board of Directors – 2015



Mike Tam
(Chair)
West Perth



George Irvin
(Vice Chair,
October to
2016 Annual
Meeting)
Bluewater



Ray Chartrand
Huron East



Doug Cook
Lambton
Shores,
Warwick



Dave Frayne
South Huron
Perth South



Wayne Hall
Lucan
Biddulph



Burkhard Metzger
Central
Huron



Don Shipway
North
Middlesex



Bob Harvey
Adelaide-
Metcalfe,
Middlesex
Centre
(Appointed
in October)



Ute Stumpf
Adelaide-
Metcalfe,
Middlesex
Centre
(Vice Chair,
Director,
until October)

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International
Year of Soils



FRONT COVER PHOTO: The United Nations declared 2015 as International Year of Soils. In this photo, a landowner in Ausable Bayfield watersheds holds in his hand some soil from his farm. This photo shows residue, porosity, and soil structure. When people from our watershed community created the *Conservation Strategy*, they said we should make it a priority to protect living things, water, and soil. Ausable Bayfield Conservation celebrated a soil health event each month of 2015 for the Year of Soils. Our commitment to help preserve topsoil and build soil health continues in the coming year and years.

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Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation

Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy

Mission

Protect, improve, conserve,
and restore the watershed
in partnership with the community

Vision

Healthy watersheds
where our needs and the needs of the natural
environment are in balance

Soil health priority in 2015 and in years to come

By Mike Tam, Chairman, 2015 Board of Directors, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA)

The International Year of Soils 2015 fit perfectly with our renewed focus on soil health.

Staff did one soil event each month to promote soil health. They gave engaging presentations to councils and community groups and promoted successful cover crop incentives. They created awareness of best management practices at demonstration sites. They took training to improve their knowledge and completed new local research on the key role of healthy soils to limit runoff and benefit water quality.

The Year of Soils is over but our focus on protecting soil health continues. The community people who wrote our new *Conservation Strategy* asked us to protect living things, water, and soil. Soil is the foundation for growing the food we eat. We rely on soil for food, feed, fibre, and fuel. Our economy depends on it. Any society that has overlooked the importance of soil has paid a steep price.

It's hard to get soil health back once it's lost. There are few places with good soil. We are blessed to have productive soil in our watershed. We must protect it for our future and the future of food production in



Mike Tam

Chair's Message

a world that needs more food every day.

I am proud to serve as Chairman of Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) as we continue to work with you to protect life and property and build watershed health and resiliency.

I thank our directors and staff for their hard work that benefits ecosystem health and human health. Thanks also go to Ute Stumpf for her years of service as director and I welcome Bob Harvey, representing Adelaide Metcalfe and Middlesex Centre.

Success is only possible thanks to the support of landowners and residents, community groups and municipalities, and our many valued partners. I commend everyone who has helped to create awareness and take action to protect and improve forest conditions, wetlands, habitat, and water resources. I would like to personally thank everyone who has been part of this effort. I wish you all the best in 2016. We look forward to working with you in the year and years to come.



The International Year of Soils 2015 is over but our renewed focus on soil health and cover crops continues.

Looking forward to new year of putting awareness into action

By Brian Horner, General Manager and Secretary-Treasurer

I thank the Board of Directors, staff, landowners, and other partners for your support in my second year as General Manager. We can be proud of projects we completed this past year within a fiscally sound framework.

A new *Watershed Management Strategy* and *Communications Plan* were completed in 2015. These are valuable guides in our work to protect life and property, create awareness, take action, and build healthy watersheds.

The year 2016 is a chance to update the *Shoreline Management Plan*. We invite you to take part in public open houses in the summer of 2016. Comments from interested people will make this a better document.

I congratulate Ausable Bayfield Conservation



Brian Horner

GM's Report

Foundation Chairman Bob Radtke and directors for completion of a new *Mandate*.

An exciting project in 2016 is raising funds towards a pedestrian bridge along the South Huron Trail. We thank all who have donated to this project and invite you to consider a donation.

Another exciting project is the annual Conservation Dinner. This charity auction is a partnership of the Exeter Lions Club, ABCA, ABCF, donors, patrons and guests, volunteers, artists, businesses and community groups. This gala event is poised to pass the mark of \$1 million in net proceeds raised over the 27-year history of the Dinner. Thank you to all who have made this possible.

I look forward to the year 2016. I am not sure of all the year will bring for our watersheds but I know there will be some important work completed and that it is partnerships that will make it possible.

Corporate Services

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) New Staff Members – 2015



Daniel Bittman
Water Resources Technician



Elizabeth Hawkins
GIS Assistant



John Jimmo
Aquatic Biologist



Hannah LaCroix
Wetlands Specialist



Nicole Luney
Conservation Educator



Meghan Tydd-Hrynyk
Planning & Regulations Assistant



James Buhrow
Assistant Water Resources Technician (Summer)



Curtis McEachen
Conservation Lands Assistant (Summer position)



Stirling Iredale
Junior Conservationist (Summer position)



Jonathan Miller
Secondary School Co-op Student

Water Management

ABCA upgrades telemetry for groundwater data

By Davin Heinbuck, Lands and Water Technologist

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) has 16 monitoring wells throughout the watershed. Five of these wells are bedrock wells and 11 are overburden wells. ABCA has logged hourly groundwater level data for more than 10 years at most well sites.

A continued partnership between conservation authorities and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) maintains a network of groundwater monitoring wells across the province. The PGMN initiative has led to the development of more than 400 monitoring wells across the province since 2001.

Data is collected and transmitted from remote sites through telemetry using the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite system (GOES). ABCA upgraded telemetry at selected watershed well sites in 2015. This makes it possible for staff to have access to current water level information through web-based software.

Groundwater level data shows that annual cycles in groundwater levels are consistent and highlight the critical annual recharge periods of autumn and spring. Based on the program's relatively short period of record it is challenging to get an accurate handle on long-term trends but groundwater levels at most of the ABCA sites have remained relatively stable over the monitoring period.

Water quality sampling is another critical component of the Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network (PGMN) and the ABCA has groundwater quality data available for each well from 2003 to 2015.



Davin Heinbuck

Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network

To match the core requirements province-wide, water quality is analyzed for nutrients, metals, general chemistry, and bacteria. Where groundwater quality does not meet the provincial guidelines, landowners and municipalities, on whose property the well is located, are notified of these results through Exceedence Reports. Numerous exceedence notices have been issued but, with few exceptions, most were for Sodium (aesthetic drinking water objective) and Fluoride, which occurs naturally in elevated levels throughout much of Southwestern Ontario.

All of the PGMN data collected into 2015 has been reviewed by ABCA staff and corrected as necessary. Water quality and quantity data has been uploaded to the MOECC's public website. Through an interactive map, water level and quality information is available free to the public at: ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/map-provincial-groundwater-monitoring-network

PGMN data also supports both the Flood Forecasting and Warning program and Ontario Low Water Response program.



ABCA upgraded water-level telemetry (automatic measurement and transmission of data from remote sites) at some wells in 2015.

Monitoring levels, flow aids flood forecasting, low water programs

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), in cooperation with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and Environment Canada, maintains and operates a data collection network in the ABCA watershed area. This 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 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. Computerized monitoring systems, in the field, transmit information by telephone or satellite directly to the office east of Exeter.

The ABCA network consists of the following:

- Fourteen automated monitoring stations, 12 of which are for water-level monitoring.

Water Level and Stream Flow Monitoring

- Most water-level monitoring stations include a combination of precipitation, temperatures, and other meteorological sensors.
- One dedicated climate monitoring station (in cooperation with Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change).
- Approximately 20 volunteer rain gauge readers providing information through a web-based data entry system.
- Sixteen groundwater monitoring stations.

Data is archived in a system called Watershed Information System Kisters (WISKI). The ongoing monitoring programs provide information for Ontario Low Water Response, Flood Forecasting and Warning, and other ABCA programs.

Monitoring of precipitation and water quantity in the watershed provide early indications of any potential flooding (or low-water conditions) so flood messages or low-water advisories can be provided to our watershed municipalities in a timely manner.

Late winter snowpack posed potential for flooding in watershed

By Davin Heinbuck, Lands and Water Technologist

It looked like an early start to winter when a deep freeze hit in November of 2014 but the next month was one of the warmest Decembers on record. It was in January of 2015 that a more traditional winter materialized. The winter lasted from January through most of March with no significant warmups or minor snowmelt events during that period.



The snowpack water equivalent exceeded 100 millimetres (mm) into March and was well above normal during the early March period in most areas. From a historical perspective, 2015 ranked only behind 2014 in measured snow water equivalent in March since the harsh winters of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The potential of a quick warmup with significant runoff and associated flooding kept Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority flood forecasting staff busy.

Flood Forecasting and Warning

Fortunately, a steady warmup and very little rainfall during the freshet saw much of the snowpack disappear without incident. Additionally, no ice jam related problems were reported.

The watershed experienced a very dry spring and, by late May, stream flows were more consistent with mid-summer conditions. However, from May 30 through mid-June, the watershed's most significant rainfall of the year occurred. In a span of just more than two weeks, most areas received more than 130 mm of rain. In addition, the later part of June saw an additional 50 mm of rainfall. Overall, with few exceptions, the remainder of the year was drier than normal.

There were no major flooding issues reported in 2015. ABCA issued seven Watershed Conditions Statements (Flood Outlook/Water Safety) messages over the course of the year and no Flood Watches or Flood Warnings.



Above photos show river ice breakup and minor ice jamming in Ausable Bayfield Conservation watersheds in 2015. The water equivalent in the snow in early March was well above normal. This posed the potential for flooding. Luckily, weather warmed up gradually during the spring freshet and snowpack disappeared without causing major flooding.

Flood Emergency Planning meeting learns about unique situation

The 2015 annual Flood Emergency Planning meeting was held at the Masonic Hall in Exeter on March 10, 2015.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) invited member municipalities and a number of stakeholders to attend and take part in the meeting. More than 20 people attended. They included representatives from seven watershed municipalities and staff and/or emergency coordinators from three counties. Local media also attended the meeting.

ABCA staff members reported on the conservation authority's roles and responsibilities in flood emergencies, ABCA flood communication testing, watershed conditions, and risk factors for spring flooding issues.

The feature presentation was an overview of the 2013 Muskoka flooding and was presented by Dave MacPherson of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (OMNRF).

From a flood forecasting and warning perspective, the majority of the Muskoka region is not represented by conservation authorities, making the OMNRF the lead agency in advising local municipalities in their flood forecasting and warning role.

The area has many dams and lakes surrounded by cottage development but the dams were generally not constructed for flood control purposes.

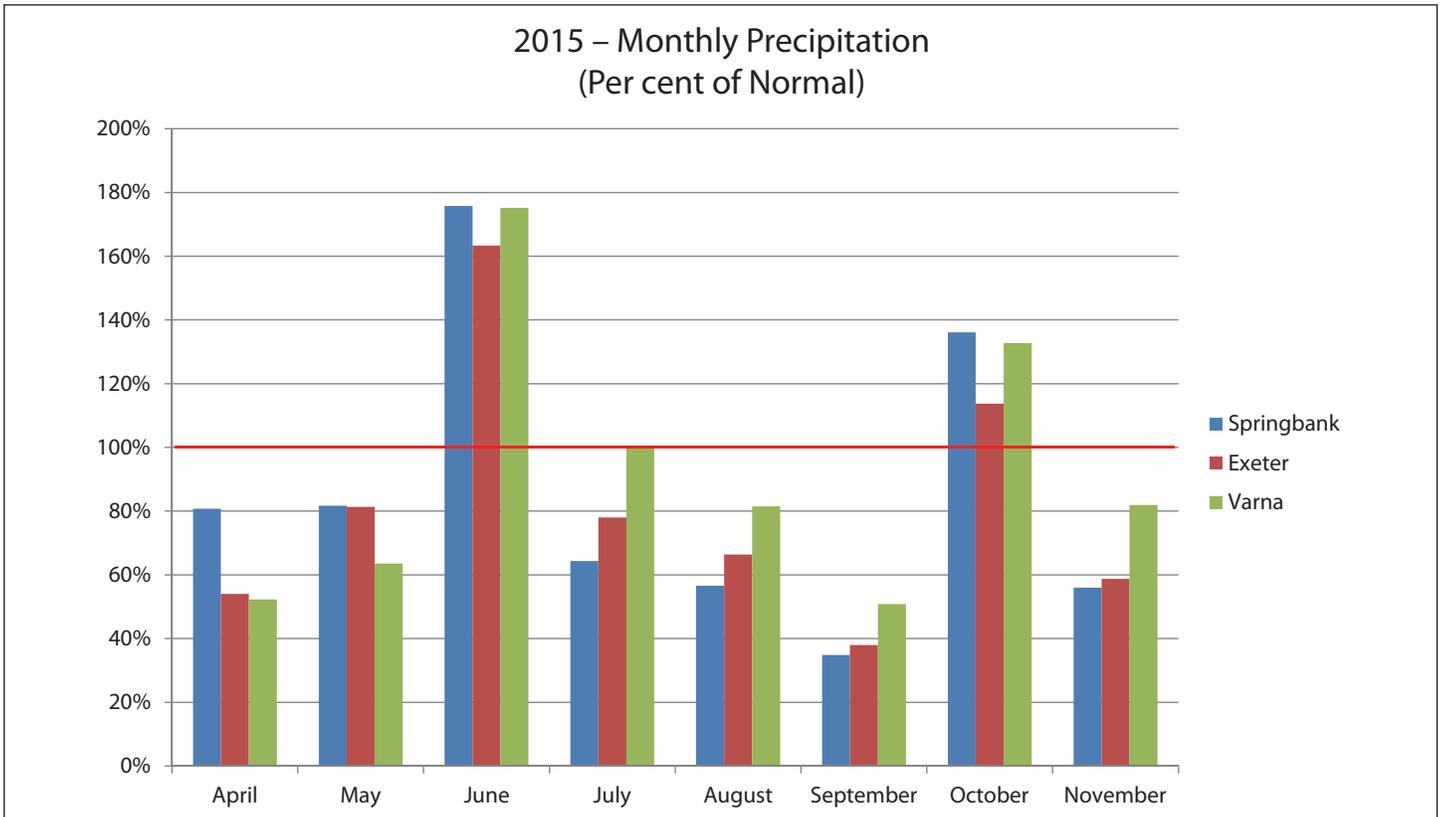
Flood Emergency Planning



The annual Flood Emergency Planning meeting was held on March 10, 2015. More than 20 people took part including municipal staff and emergency coordinators from three counties.

A unique challenge to operating the dams is to ensure they do not get washed out during flood situations yet ensure they are still able to retain sufficient water for summer recreation and navigation.

The meeting continues to provide a forum for discussion and planning to make all agencies better prepared to deal with flooding emergencies.



Water Response Team issues Low Water Advisory in October

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

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) continued to be involved in the Ontario Low Water Response (OLWR) Program during 2015. The program was created after extreme dry conditions were experienced in parts of Ontario in 1999.



Alec Scott

The Ontario Low Water Response document is used as a guiding document for how municipal and provincial agencies should react during periods of water shortages and defines levels of response to low water conditions.

The local ABCA Low Water Response Team (WRT) is made up of municipal, provincial, and agency representatives and representatives of ABCA, Ontario Stone and Sand and Gravel Association, Golf Course Owners Association, Alliance of Ontario Food Processors, Thedford-Grand Bend Vegetable Growers, Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, Huron County Federation of Agriculture, and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

During the year, the WRT held one meeting and was provided monthly watershed condition reports.

Low Water Response

A Level 1 Low Water Advisory was issued on October 1, 2015 due to below-normal precipitation amounts in the summer.

About 20 volunteer rain gauge readers provide valuable information on the extent and amount of precipitation received in the watershed. This supplements existing automated rain gauge network operated by the ABCA to support its water quantity programs.

The Ontario Low Water Response program provides the public and member municipalities with information on the condition of our watersheds in relation to possible drought problems.

Levels of Response

- **Level 1**
– Voluntary Reduction 10%
- **Level 2**
– Voluntary Reduction 20%
- **Level 3**
– Mandatory Water Use Restrictions Considered

ABCA staff inspect, maintain erosion control structures

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

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) inspected and performed maintenance on water and erosion control structures owned or constructed by the ABCA. This work is part of the ABCA mandate and agreements with watershed municipalities.

This work included 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 conservation authority staff

Structures, Operations, and Maintenance

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 conservation authority staff. Work included vegetation control around structures and general minor repairs to prevent larger maintenance problems in the future.

Dam safety review updated; Repairs done to Armstrong West project

Two Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure studies and one repair were undertaken in 2015.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority commenced Dam Safety Reviews for Morrison Dam and Parkhill Dam to update information that was collected in the initial Dam Safety Reviews completed in 2004. The reviews are expected to be completed by March 2016.

A repair was made to the Armstrong West Erosion Control Project completed in 2006. Additional rock rip-rap was added to the downstream end of the project to strengthen the transition to natural shoreline.

Since 2003, the Ontario Ministry of Natural

Water and Erosion Control

Resources and Forestry's Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) funding program has been available to fund major maintenance work on conservation authority flood and erosion control projects. Under this program Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority can apply for 50 per cent funding for major maintenance projects.

The ongoing inspection and maintenance work on flood and erosion control projects ensures that the structures will continue to protect watershed residents from flooding and erosion hazards into the future.

Update of hydrology study is to improve flood forecasting capability

Watershed Hydrology Update – Phase 1

The watershed hydrology information that is currently used to support water management projects, development regulations, and the ABCA Flood Forecasting and Warning System was developed in 1992. Since that time there has been a complete update of our GIS information base as well as an additional 22 years of monitored stream flows through our monitoring network.

This project would update the original hydrology study which was completed in 1992, resulting in a more accurate representation of how surface water

Additional Water Management Activities

behaves in the ABCA watershed, improve our flood forecasting capability, and provide information for updating flood line mapping for Flood Damage Centres. The project is to be completed in 2016.

ABCA Natural Heritage Strategy

As the first step to developing a watershed-based *Natural Heritage Strategy*, a report was prepared which outlined a method for rating the significance of terrestrial and aquatic natural areas and features. The rating methodology will be tested in 2016.

ABCA begins Shoreline Management Plan update

By Geoffrey Cade, Supervisor of Water and Planning

In 2015, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) started a two-year process to update its Shoreline Management Plan which was last reviewed in 2000.



Geoffrey Cade

The Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) is an important document for the ABCA and people in shoreline watersheds. This plan identifies and describes shoreline processes within the ABCA jurisdiction. It also is an important guide that provides direction for the implementation of the ABCA's planning and regulations programs along the shoreline.

A local Steering Committee has been created to oversee the update. This committee is made up of individuals representing various stakeholder groups, including landowners, municipalities, and counties.

A consulting team has been retained and, in 2015, the team initiated the required technical work to review the extent of the shoreline hazards that were identified in the SMP (2000).

The public engagement strategy, recommended by the project team and endorsed by the steering committee, was launched in 2015.

Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) Update

There was a significant online and social media presence and with several articles in local newspapers.

In the summer of 2016 the ABCA will be hosting public open houses once additional technical information is available.

It is hoped that a draft of the updated SMP will be presented to Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority's Board of Directors for its consideration in November of 2016.

When complete and approved, the SMP will represent the most recent and accurate shoreline data, help staff implement ABCA regulations, inform the public, and ultimately identify means to safely develop or redevelop the Lake Huron shoreline.

ABCA Planning Activities in 2015:

- Formal Inquiries – 105
- Planning Act Applications – 68

GIS helps ABCA, partners to realize their project goals

By Tracey McPherson, GISP, GIS/IT Coordinator

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and information technology (IT) services at Ausable Bayfield Conservation ensure information and access to information is available now and in the future.



Tracey McPherson

Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, has become an integral part of the day-to-day operations at Ausable Bayfield Conservation. All staff members have access to GIS information through an internal mapping application called GeoPortal. Individual GIS staff members work hard to keep data layers up to date, create and link databases, create maps, and complete project-specific analysis.

Information Technology, or IT, provides all computer networking and hardware and software support to staff. IT is responsible for:

- Purchasing of all hardware and software.
- Maintenance of all hardware and software.
- Troubleshooting issues.

GIS actions in 2015:

- Digital elevation models (DEM) completed for most of watershed.
- Completed mapping and data requests for staff, consultants, and partners.
- Purchased and installed new server.
- Participated in Southwestern Ontario Orthophotography Project (SWOOP) partnership to acquire new air photos.
- Provided input to Shoreline Management Plan Update; data for Hydrology Study.
- Presented at Latornell Conservation Symposium on using GIS for agricultural best management practices.

GIS Results:

- Collaborated with partners making it possible to complete projects with them.
- Provided information to support decisions.
- Ensured robust, ongoing network support.

Higher lake levels lead to shoreline erosion concerns

By Andrew Bicknell, P. Eng., Regulations Coordinator

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority's *Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Regulation (Ontario Regulation 147/06)* regulates new development within hazardous lands not only along the Lake Huron shoreline but also areas inland in vicinity of other naturally occurring hazards such as river and stream valleys, flood-susceptible locations, and wetlands.



Andrew Bicknell

Shoreline residents continued to react to the relatively higher lake levels in 2015. In 2015, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) staff responded to numerous requests from shoreline residents for the installation of shoreline protection to combat erosion. The installation of shore protection along the toe of the lake bank is an activity requiring prior written permission from the conservation authority. Conservation authority policies were supportive of some applications while concerns were expressed with others.

The installation of new shore protection can be detrimental in some circumstances. Staff must consider very closely the merit of each application having regard for the characteristics of the coastline and surrounding area and even the characteristics of nearshore areas beyond the water's edge where the work is proposed. Sometimes this involves a specialized discipline of engineering referred to as coastal engineering.

The preferred approach toward the safeguarding of life and property has to be one respecting the principle of prevention versus one of reaction. This is best achieved through a preventive, proactive approach administered through planning and regulations to keep new development a safe distance from the shoreline hazards.

Flood plain management keeps people away from hazard areas

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), through flood plain management programs, continues to direct new development away from hazardous areas. This protects people and property.

The ongoing maintenance of existing flood and erosion control structures will continue to protect existing development with hazard areas.

Regulations Report



2015:

- 60 applications for permission
 - 101 minor work permits
 - 12 drain reports reviewed
 - 34 drain maintenance reviews

(Standard compliance requirements)

In 2015, conservation authority staff continued to work with commercial wind power developers on project areas in the ABCA watershed. Staff focus in 2015 was mainly administrative related to ongoing construction activity. In dealing with wind power development, the ABCA role is guided by Bill 150. ABCA permits are only required when wind power development activities occur on lands identified by *Ontario Regulation 147/06*.

In 2015, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority initiated the process of updating the ABCA's Policies and Procedures Manual for the Administration of *Ontario Regulation 147/06* and Municipal Plan Input and Review Manual. The manual provides a policy framework, and assists staff with decision-making in regard to review of permit applications under Regulation 147/06 and where staff provide an extension service to municipalities providing plan input review. The manual was last updated in 2007. It is advantageous to review and update the manual periodically to ensure it remains current and consistent with watershed needs and priorities and changing legislation. It is anticipated the updated manual will be completed in 2016.

Outcomes

Continued monitoring of precipitation and water quantity in the watershed provides early indications of potential flooding or low-water conditions.

Regular review and updating of watershed studies helps to ensure decisions relating to watershed issues are being made with the best information available.

Source protection plans approved; implementation begins

By Jenna Allain, Program Supervisor, Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Region

There were many long strides forward in 2015 in the protection of municipal drinking water sources in the Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley watersheds.

The Province of Ontario approved locally-developed source protection plans in January. This had great meaning for members of the source protection committee who had worked hard since 2007 to create these plans. I thank new and past committee members for all their hard work.

The plans took effect in April of 2015, and with that, the source protection program has shifted into the new and exciting phase of implementation. Staff from Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley conservation authorities, in partnership with municipalities, have spent much of 2015 working to implement the policies contained in the plans to protect municipal drinking water sources.

There are nine municipalities in the source protection region with groundwater as their municipal drinking water source. Some risks to groundwater in those municipalities will now be managed through a new tool called a risk management plan (RMP). Risk management plans are negotiated with people in wellhead protection areas and enforced by municipally appointed risk management officials. Eight municipalities in the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Region have delegated risk management official services to Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA). Setting up a risk management office at ABCA, and initiating risk management plans, was one of the big steps for staff in 2015.

Staff members are also working with municipalities to implement education and outreach policies of the source protection plans. This has taken place throughout 2015 and is to continue until the end of March 2016. I thank all the people who attended our information open houses and who spoke to us at meetings, site visits, by phone, and by mail or e-mail.

Over the next 21 months we will continue to work with municipal staff, implementing bodies, and people engaged in threat activities in the region as we complete risk management plans that help to keep local drinking water sources safe and clean.



Jenna Allain



Drinking Water Source Protection

I thank all the staff of the source protection region and the conservation authorities and would like to make special mention of Mary Lynn MacDonald who is the lead risk management official in the ABCA risk management office.

I would like to thank all the property owners who have already made positive changes in their practices to further reduce risk to drinking water sources. We look forward to working with more people in the coming year to share ways we can protect local drinking water sources.

One of the upcoming changes is an upgraded local source protection website early in 2016. Visit us at sourcewaterinfo.on.ca to stay up-to-date.

Actions

Here are some of the actions taken in 2015 to protect local municipal drinking water sources:

- Source protection plan approval.
- Education and outreach implementation.
- Risk Management Office establishment.
- Six new members join the Source Protection Committee from industry, commerce, environmental, municipal, and public sectors.

Results

- More than \$1 million in water protection projects on-the-ground: 2007 to 2015.
- The region was one of the leaders across the province developing and finalizing some of the source protection program's first risk management plans. Risk management officials continue to work with landowners to establish the remaining RMPs by April 2018.
- Changes in management practices to add protection to drinking water sources.
- Increased awareness and positive actions taken by people in vulnerable areas.

Monitoring water quality, working with community

By Mari Veliz, Healthy Watersheds Supervisor

Creating watershed and community connections between individual actions and downstream water quality conditions is accomplished with support of the Healthy Watersheds Team by:



Mari Veliz

- 1) Monitoring water quality, fish and other aquatic animals; and
- 2) Working with community groups to improve local waterways.

The aquatic monitoring program helps to evaluate our collective efforts to improve and protect water, soil, and living things (*Table 1*).

Table 1: 2015 ABCA Water Quality and Biomonitoring Stations

Type of station	Number
Dry weather water quality	47
Wet weather water quality	18
Best Management Practices verification	10
Citizen Science	9
Freshwater mussels	1
Fish	46
Reptiles (turtles)	4
Benthic macroinvertebrates	34

The number of stations reflects the funding commitments from year to year.

Some of these data are summarized every five years for the *Watershed Report Card*. Other research and monitoring programs at Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) address important questions about species at risk and evaluate the effectiveness of different rural best management practices (BMPs). Watch for water quality and biological results at abca.on.ca.

Past research that we have undertaken has demonstrated the importance of collecting water quality data after rain events. Monitoring BMPs in small subwatersheds has continued over the past year.

Watershed Communities Taking Action

In 2015, Healthy Watersheds staff members spent time collecting field data, calculating sediment and nutrient loads at the monitoring sites, and compiling data and reports for project funders.

Community outreach is also critical to reaching our goal, as we typically see more conservation actions taken when there is financial and technical support for individuals. Healthy Watershed staff continue to help community conservation groups and stakeholders with their activities (e.g., events and monitoring) (*Table 2*).

Table 2: 2015 Community Outreach by ABCA Healthy Watersheds Team

Community Outreach	Number
Community groups	5
Community events	13
Watershed Communities in Action*	6

** Bayfield, North of Bayfield, Ausable, Grand Bend, Port Franks, Little Ausable*



2015
International
Year of Soils

Over the past few years, the research conducted by the ABCA has highlighted the importance of soil health on agricultural lands for improved water quality. The year 2015 was International Year of Soils and Ausable Bayfield Conservation hosted monthly activities in local communities to highlight the importance of soil health. To celebrate World Soil Day, the ABCA offered free soil tests to five watershed residents through a draw.

Monitoring takes place during wet weather

By Brynn Upsdell Wright, Water Quality Specialist, and Daniel Bittman, Water Quality Technician

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) monitored 71 stations for water quality and 34 stations for benthic macroinvertebrates in 2015. Benthic macroinvertebrates are small animals with no backbone that live on the bottom of streams, rivers, and lakes. They give us information about the health of local water quality.

This monitoring was made possible by partnerships fostered with five community groups, one foundation, one municipality, one health unit, three provincial ministries, and four federal departments.

Three watersheds – Gully Creek, Main Bayfield, and Little Ausable – were intensively monitored this year under wet-weather conditions, contributing to baseline data that will help in detecting future changes in water quality. The ABCA has also identified, through work with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, ways to optimize wet-weather sampling.

In the past, Ausable Bayfield Conservation evaluated water quality based on pollutant concentrations (pollutant mass per litre of water).

Water Quality Monitoring

Pollutant loads are more conducive than concentrations to comparing different watersheds or to detecting changes in one watershed over time. A load is the mass of a pollutant that passes through a cross-section of a stream in a specific amount of time.



Brynn Upsdell Wright



Daniel Bittman

In 2015, the ABCA streamlined its process for matching concentrations to water discharge (the volume of water moving through a stream in a given amount of time) and calculating pollutant loads, which has improved the conservation authority's ability to evaluate stream water quality.

Great Lakes stewardship program looks at BMPs in subwatersheds

By Abigail Gutteridge, Healthy Watersheds Technician

The Great Lakes Agricultural Stewardship Initiative (GLASI) is a new program by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA).

The GLASI stewardship program connects landowners in both Lake Huron and Lake Erie watersheds with Certified Crop Advisors (CCAs). The program allows certified crop advisors to help landowners assess the health of their farmland, through the Farmland Health Check-Up, and determine which best management practices (BMPs) will help improve farmland health, and ultimately improve water quality in the lake. Funding is available through the OSCIA to help landowners implement these practices.

The GLASI program includes a Priority Subwatershed Project to take a more focused approach to stewardship in a small subwatershed area.

Concentrating on BMPs in a local area will allow for measurement of soil and nutrient loss, specifically phosphorus loss. It is expected that reductions in soil and nutrient loss will contribute to protection and improvement of water quality in the Great Lakes.



Abigail Gutteridge

The Gully Creek Watershed was chosen as a priority subwatershed for the GLASI Program, building on the previous stewardship and monitoring efforts of the Watershed-Based Best Management Practice Evaluation (WBBE) program and the Rural Stormwater Management Model (RSWMM) Project. Monitoring efforts are to continue at both the watershed scale, as well as at the field scale, by continuing to monitor at four berm sites. The Garvey Creek-Glenn Drain Watershed, located in the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority watershed area, is also part of this priority subwatershed project. This program is scheduled to continue until the end of 2017.



The Main Bayfield Watershed Plan supports efforts to manage stormwater runoff and keep contaminants out of water. Bayfield Girl Guides painted 21 storm drains through the Yellow Fish Road program to educate local people about protecting water. (Photos by Melody Falconer-Pounder, courtesy of The Bayfield Breeze)

Main Bayfield community implements watershed plan

By Hope Brock, Healthy Watersheds Technician

The Main Bayfield watershed community continued to implement recommendations from the Main Bayfield Watershed Plan in 2015 thanks to the Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation, Environment Canada, and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. Plan recommendations help address the challenges of managing urban and agricultural runoff.



Hope Brock

To help raise awareness about the importance of keeping stormwater clean, 21 storm drains were painted by the Bayfield Guides through the Yellow Fish Road program.

Main Bayfield Watershed Plan

Another rain barrel blitz sold 113 rain barrels to watershed residents, which will help capture about 25,000 litres of stormwater per storm event.

A watershed walk took place within the Middleton's Creek subwatershed where 113 best management practices were identified to help manage stormwater.

To help monitor watershed conditions, five citizen scientists were trained to collect water samples at three stormwater outfalls along the Bayfield beach.

Fourteen storm events were monitored from June to August.

Community reports sightings of 130 turtles; six turtle species

By Hope Brock, Healthy Watersheds Technician

Almost 130 turtle sightings were reported in 2015, which included records of six species that occur in the Grand Bend-Port Franks area.

The turtle monitoring program, and the great work of all the volunteers, helps us to better understand the turtles, and the habitats they use. Funding is gratefully acknowledged from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation.

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) continued its population study in 2015 with the use of a canine unit trained to detect turtles. Five turtles were found, measured, notched, and released. Four of them were species at risk.

Community-Based Turtle Monitoring

Ausable Bayfield Conservation also offered turtle nest protection cages to landowners who found turtles laying eggs on their property. One such nest had to be removed from its location on a gravel driveway and incubated off-site. The property owners were able to release 32 Snapping Turtle eggs back into the nearest watercourse.



Community volunteers help to monitor turtles.



Ausable Bayfield Conservation staff capture fish using a seine net in the Old Ausable Channel in the Grand Bend area.

Fish surveys done at six sites in Old Ausable Channel

By John Jimmo, Aquatic Biologist

The Old Ausable Channel (OAC) is one of the few remaining locations in Ontario where three fish species at risk (SAR) including Pugnose Shiner, Lake Chubsucker, and Grass Pickerel can be found. Monitoring the habitat conditions and status of these SAR fishes is essential to making informed management decisions involving the OAC.



John Jimmo

Fish surveys were completed at six locations in the OAC in 2015 to evaluate changes in the fish community overtime. Habitat monitoring was also completed at several locations to better understand dissolved oxygen levels and water quality throughout the OAC.

Education and outreach events were hosted in Ailsa Craig, Grand Bend, and Port Franks to provide information to community members on aquatic species at risk.

Ausable River Recovery Strategy

These projects were completed with support from the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment Canada, Pinery Provincial Park, and community members.

ENDANGERED

The Old Ausable Channel provides clean, clear, slow-moving water with plentiful aquatic vegetation essential to the Lake Chubsucker.



Juvenile Lake Chubsucker

Five wetland projects restore seven acres

By Rachael Scholten, Stewardship Technician

Wetlands are vital ecosystems and they provide many important benefits. Wetlands:

- Supply moisture during droughts.
- Reduce downstream erosion and flooding.
- Provide natural water filtration and purification.



Rachael Scholten

Five wetlands were restored in our watersheds during 2015. These wetlands projects total more than seven acres (or three hectares).

More than 300 students and volunteers took part in five events about the enhancement of riparian wetland areas. A bus tour attracted 22 members from different partner organizations to share ideas and information about wetland and riparian restoration.

More than 85 per cent of the wetlands in the counties of Huron, Middlesex, and Lambton have been drained since pre-settlement times.

The Healthy Headwaters Wetland Initiative works, with the support of our local community, to increase wetland coverage, encourage landowner participation, and educate about wetlands on our landscape.

Healthy Headwaters Wetlands Initiative



Healthy Headwaters Wetlands Initiative offers technical help and funding incentives to restore local wetlands.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) works with Stewardship Councils and local agencies to offer the Healthy Headwaters Wetlands Initiative program. ABCA is able to deliver this program for landowners thanks to the support of funding partners which have included Ducks Unlimited Canada; Ontario Trillium Foundation; RBC Blue Water Project; Environment Canada's National Wetland Conservation Fund; Enbridge; and many others.

The Healthy Headwaters Wetlands Initiative provides technical advice and financial incentives for landowners to complete wetland projects. We thank all landowners who have protected or restored wetlands on their properties.

Seventy coastal wetland areas mapped as part of study

by Hannah LaCroix, Wetlands Technician

The identification of coastal wetlands in Huron County began in 2015 with a partnership between Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry in Guelph. Projects of this kind are occurring across all of the Great Lakes, but this project is the first of its kind for Huron County.



Hannah LaCroix

Seventy coastal wetland areas were mapped, in 2015, in the part of Huron County that is within Ausable Bayfield Conservation's watershed area.

This project aims to identify and map coastal wetlands through field work and digital mapping along the Lake Huron coastline to improve upon older data. This is done using new GIS photography to ensure accurate regulation of these areas.

Huron County Coastal Wetland Study

Identifying coastal wetlands helps protect rare and unique habitats that are home to migrating birds, unique plant communities, and at-risk reptiles and amphibian species.

Coastal wetlands are our last-defence filtration units that absorb and prevent pollution and nutrients from entering Lake Huron. Eutrophication is an increase of chemicals such as nitrogen and phosphorus that can cause reductions of dissolved oxygen and increase blue-green algae blooms known to toxify drinking water. When coastal wetlands exist along the shoreline, nutrients are diverted, and water discharge is managed. This reduces erosion and floods are less likely along adjoining creeks and gullies directly connected to Lake Huron.



In photos at left, Cliff Ryan, Past Chair of the Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre Museum Committee, is shown with new volunteer museum steward, Bob O'Donnell, popularly known as The Fossil Guy. They are with upgraded displays at the museum at Rock Glen Conservation Area near Arkona. Dale Cable (photo at top right), Park Superintendent, was thanked for his regular upkeep of the museum, painting inside, and "for always taking time to talk to people about the museum and for always keeping the display cases looking clean."

Staff document terrestrial species at risk

By Kate Monk, Stewardship, Land and Education Manager

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) owns more than 9,000 acres of land throughout the watershed.

A number of research projects were completed in 2015 by various levels of government and academic institutions. The most significant project, by ABCA staff, mapped and documented terrestrial species at risk on ABCA lands. Known occurrences from previous work in 2008-2009 were revisited. As part of that work new occurrences are being found. The target species include Goldenseal, Ginseng, Heart-leaved Plantain, and Flowering Dogwood. Coincidentally, a status update on Goldenseal is being prepared by Environment Canada and occurrence information and documentation methods were exchanged.

Field staff installed a new fence at Klopp Commemorative Woods and parking lot barriers at Clinton Conservation Area.

Boardwalk repairs were completed at Rock Glen Conservation Area. The Arkona Lions Club updated the fossil and artifact displays with the expertise of museum steward Bob O'Donnell. The ABCA painted the interior of the natural heritage information



Kate Monk

Conservation Land Management

room of the Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre at Rock Glen Conservation Area. YouTube videos were also completed for the conservation area to attract more visitors to the scenic park.

The ABCA and Lambton Shores Nature Trails volunteers collaborated to complete an accessible stone-dust trail at Ausable River Cut Conservation Area. The trail links the parking lot to a lookout platform at the Ausable River.

Hazard Ash tree removal continues along the nature trails at conservation areas. Morrison Dam Conservation Area was the main area of focus.

The Good Dog Program gained momentum thanks to the support of Miller's Country Store. Patrol officers and staff provide free dog treats to pet owners who have their dogs on leashes. The 'treat or ticket' concept has increased compliance with the leash legislation.

The remaining agricultural land at Kime Tract North was planted with tree seedlings to increase interior habitat. The first trees through the Footprints to Forests carbon compensation (carbon offset) program were planted at Triebner Tract.

ABCA forest management demonstrates BMPs at work

By Ian Jean, Forestry and Land Stewardship Specialist

Management of Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) forests provides an opportunity to demonstrate best management practices to the watershed community.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation plays an important role in promoting sustainable practices that enable economic returns while at the same time protecting and conserving natural heritage values. This is especially important due to the relatively low amount of forest cover (14%, *Ausable Bayfield Watershed Report Card 2013*) in the watershed. This forest cover is mainly privately owned and managed.

Emerald Ash Borer continues to be the primary factor influencing forest management in the watershed. The Borer is now present throughout the watershed causing widespread decline and mortality in all native Ash trees.

Staff assessed a number of sites within the ABCA's Hay Swamp properties. Four stands containing a large number of mature Ash trees, infested with Emerald Ash Borer, were selected for an Ash salvage operation.

Staff completed tree marking, volume estimates, and tendered the marked timber for sale to selected timber buyers. A total of 425 Ash and 45 Soft Maple were marked for harvest. The estimated volume of wood from both species was 72,000 FBM (Foot Board Measure). Miller Wood Products, of Exeter, was the high bid on the timber at a price of \$18,000.

Timber harvest operations occurred from mid-September through the first week of October. Three of the four stands were completed before wet weather and ground forced the suspension of operations. The timber harvest is to resume in the summer of 2016 once ground conditions improve.

The retention of trees to provide habitat and food sources (nut trees such as Oak and Beech) for wildlife is an important consideration when marking trees on conservation authority property. Another important consideration is the identification of significant natural heritage features (such as stick nests and rare species). Several large Ash and Soft Maple were retained during the marking and harvest operations to provide wildlife habitat.

ABCA does not permit timber harvest between April 1 and July 1 due to it being breeding season for birds, amphibians, and other wildlife.

Forest Management on ABCA Lands



Measuring change in local forests helps to understand forest pests and climate change impacts. Gregg Blackler (at left) is one of the volunteers measuring locally and reporting globally as a local citizen scientist with the Go Global program to monitor tree and species changes at forest plots including Bannockburn Conservation Area near Varna. Forest plots show how effective local monitoring and reporting can be to find changes in forest diversity over the long term.

Hay Swamp Conifer Thinning

Selective thinning of ABCA-owned conifer plantations was completed at two locations in Hay Swamp along Parr Line and Dashwood Road. These plantations were row-thinned in the late 1990s. At that time every fourth row was removed so this recent operation was a selective thinning on the remaining rows. A small amount of Ash was salvaged for firewood within the pine plantations.

Thinning is prescribed to promote the regeneration of native deciduous trees and improve the health and vigour of the planted conifers.

ABCA staff completed most of the tree marking in August. Selective thinning was done by a mechanized fixed-head harvester during September.

Ontario Thinning Specialists, of Princeton, was the contractor.

Tree Planting on ABCA Lands

The last remaining open land at ABCA Kime Tract was planted to trees in May 2015. A five-acre section of land north of West Corner Drive had been retired in 2014. Funding from the Trees Ontario 50 Million Tree Program and the Middlesex Stewardship Council enabled reforestation of the site with 3,000 tree seedlings. A mix of conifers with native Bur Oak, Red Oak, Walnut, Soft Maple, and Hackberry was planted.

Landowners plant more than 50,000 trees

By Ian Jean, Forestry and Land Stewardship Specialist

Many watershed residents continue to improve and restore the watershed by planting trees. More than 175 landowners took part in the spring and fall planting programs. Just more than 50,000 trees were distributed through the Spring Tree Program and more than 1,700 through the Fall Tree Program.



Ian Jean

The high level of participation in the tree planting program demonstrates that a large portion of the community is engaged directly in activities to improve the watershed.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) facilitates tree planting in cooperation with the watershed community in order to implement projects that protect, conserve, and restore the watershed. Trees are planted to establish windbreaks, watercourse buffers, reduce erosion on steep slopes and banks, and to create or enlarge forests.

During the past year of 2015, Ausable Bayfield Conservation staff planted 15 farm windbreaks which will reduce wind erosion and water erosion of the soil. Erosion can have a negative effect on water quality and these projects reduce that erosion.

Treed buffers were installed along 12 stream reaches or wetlands that will filter runoff and provide a physical barrier protecting surface water. Staff planted 12 projects to create or enlarge forests that will contribute to improving forest cover, biodiversity, and forest health.

The trees planted by watershed residents who purchase trees through the conservation authority tree program are used for many more stewardship projects not counted above.

One of the important roles of Ausable Bayfield Conservation staff is to pursue cost-share funding to provide support for landowners who wish to undertake beneficial projects.

Funding for tree planting was secured from a variety of federal, provincial, county, and municipal programs including Habitat Stewardship Program, Huron County Clean Water Project, Middlesex Stewardship Council, Ontario Community Environmental Fund, Trees Ontario, and National Wetland Conservation Fund.

Tree Planting Program



Community Tree Planting

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority and Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation were partners in helping to form the 5000 Trees Project, an initiative in Grand Bend to plant 5,000 trees in the community by the year 2020.

The 5000 Trees Project grew from concerns following the tornado that hit Grand Bend in August 2014 which resulted in the loss of hundreds of mature trees as well as the loss of Ash trees to Emerald Ash Borer. The initiative provided two tree-related information sessions in April, a subsidy for bulk orders of 20 trees or more in spring and autumn and community tree sales in May and October. The project was a success resulting in more than 1,800 native trees planted in this first year.

The partnership included financial support from the Grand Bend Community Foundation, Rotary Club of Grand Bend, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation, and Municipality of Lambton Shores. Port Franks Ausable Optimists provided food and refreshments at the tree sale events where were hosted at St. John's-by-the-Lake Anglican Church on Highway 21.

School Tree Planting

An important component of Ausable Bayfield Conservation's tree program is to engage local schools and communities in making positive improvements to the watershed. Stewardship staff members work with ABCA conservation educators to deliver tree planting events with related education. Three Clinton schools participated again in October of 2015 in planting more than 100 trees as part of their ongoing wetland naturalization project.



Conservationist of the Year Award winners Doug Richards and Jane Sadler Richards, of Cordner Farms, are shown with Don Lobb, speaker at the annual Conservation Awards evening.



Huron County's Clean Water Project has helped residents and groups complete 1,800 water-quality projects over 10 years. Stu Steckle, of the Zurich area, is one of more than 1,000 landowners to do projects on their properties with county grants. The Angus beef farmer said the county program has helped him do projects such as tree planting by the creek where cattle once pastured.

Landowners plant trees, reduce erosion, decommission wells

By Kate Monk, Stewardship, Land and Education Manager

Stewardship activities are the culmination of the efforts of many staff, student programs, community outreach, and technical experts.

People do projects for a variety of reasons. Meeting the needs of the landowner and Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) is the common ground where work is accomplished.

Most projects were tree planting, erosion control, and well decommissioning undertaken by private landowners. Grants to help with project costs also overcame barriers. Funding was secured from local, provincial, and federal governments as well as foundations. The Huron County Clean Water Project, Environment Canada, and Forests Ontario (formerly Trees Ontario) were the major grant providers.

Stewardship projects contributed to International Year of Soils. These projects included 2,300 acres of farmland in the ABCA watersheds enrolled in the cover crop grant category of the Huron Clean Water Project. Producers will receive a \$10 per-acre incentive payment in Spring 2016 if there is a minimum of 50 per cent residue on their fields.

The Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group and the ABCA held two agricultural information sessions in early August to inform the community about the importance of controlling



Kate Monk

Private Land Stewardship Program

Stewardship Projects Receiving Funding through Programs Delivered by ABCA

Municipality	Number of Projects	Grants
Adelaide Metcalfe	2	\$10,000
Bluewater	22	\$44,747
Central Huron	18	\$63,472
Huron East	8	\$13,137
Lambton Shores	5	\$37,047
Lucan Biddulph	4	\$11,740
Middlesex Centre	5	\$12,104
North Middlesex	13	\$67,643
South Huron	22	\$26,362
TOTALS	99	\$286,252
NOTE: Totals do not include funding from programs delivered by Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) that did not receive assistance from Ausable Bayfield Conservation staff members.		

invasive *Phragmites australis* (European Common Reed) in municipal drains and roadside ditches. The two groups also collaborated to create and distribute the first fact sheet in Ontario on the topic. The County of Huron contracted the ABCA to control *Phragmites* along its roadsides in the ABCA watershed.

Conservation educators add soil-themed programs

By Denise Iszczuk and Melissa Prout, Conservation Educators

Conservation education programs, offered by Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), build relationships between participants and the natural world and help develop tomorrow's stewards of soil and water.



Denise Iszczuk



Melissa Prout

In-School Programs

Teacher job action – combined with previously existing barriers such as busing costs, liability considerations, and program fees – resulted in a substantial decrease in field trip participation in 2015. To overcome this, conservation educators delivered programs in the classroom and schoolyard.



As 2015 was the International Year of Soils, staff highlighted soils and their importance through new curriculum-linked programs for Grades 3 and 9. Modified field trip programs were brought to schoolyards with acceptable outdoor space.

Secondary School Programs

Ausable Bayfield Conservation launched new secondary school level programming with a conference called *My Great Lake – My Future*. Students from area schools came together to explore their connection to Lake Huron and the career pathways related to it, thanks to funding from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. Experiential learning activities included participation in a beach cleanup that looked at microplastics in local waterways; a river walk that investigated benthic invertebrates (small aquatic creatures with no backbone that live at the bottom of a water body) as indicators of water quality; and an agriculture-based choose-your-own-adventure simulation.

Conservation Education



Conservation education takes place both in and outside the classroom.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation School Group Programs	Students	Hours Outdoors
Sylvan Conservation Program	277	3,600
Field Trips to Conservation Areas	3,267	6,534
In-School Programs	4,424	1,986

Community Programs by ABCA Conservation Education Staff	Participants	Hours Outdoors
Non-Profit Groups	608	912
Summer Nature Day Camp	61	3,660
Special Events	1,900	1,928

Many of the students at the Great Lakes conference were enrolled in a Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) that provides experiential training in the areas of environment, agriculture, or energy.

This new Ontario-wide program provided a new avenue for *Watershed Management Strategy* messaging to non-traditional youth audiences through certification courses and specialized training. Partnering with St. Anne's Catholic Secondary School, conservation educators delivered two certification courses and an agricultural entrepreneurship workshop.



ABCA leverages levy funds to bring in more revenue

By Brian Horner, CPA, General Manager and Secretary-Treasurer

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) continues to be one of the leading conservation authorities in Ontario when it comes to building upon local levy dollars and successfully leveraging those levy funds to bring in additional third-party funding.

Thanks to the successful approval of grant and funding applications, submitted by staff during the year, local levy dollars represented approximately 30 per cent of total revenue. This is compared to other conservation authorities across the province that had similar levies representing about 48 per cent of their total revenue.

Similar to the past few years, this conservation authority has continued to leverage every local dollar and successfully generated approximately \$2.50 in

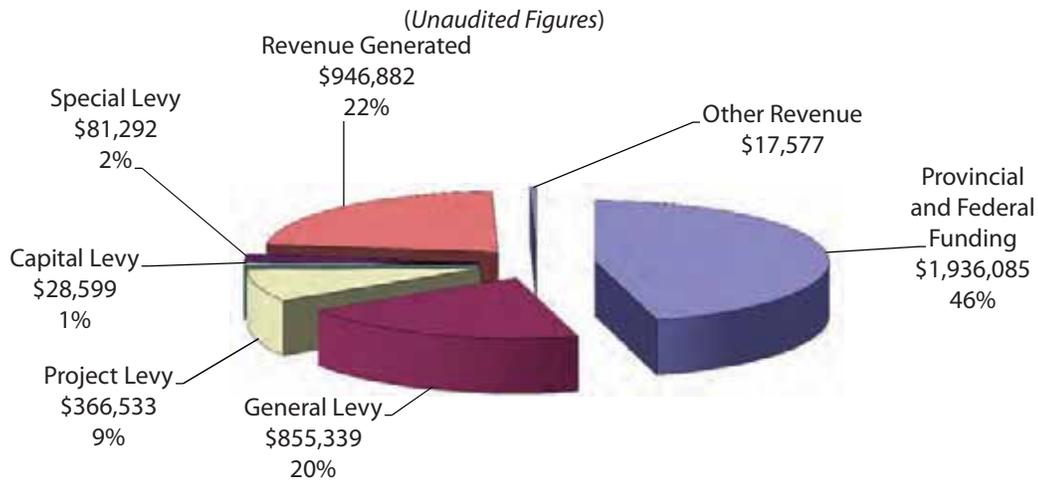
Financial Summary

additional funding. This compares to the provincial average among other conservation authorities of roughly one-to-one revenue (one levy dollar for one additional dollar brought in).

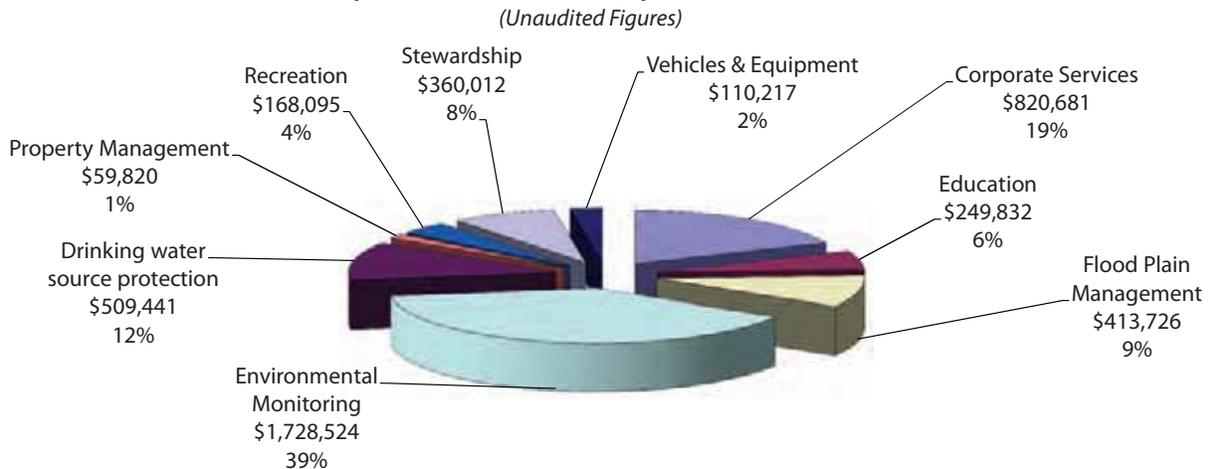
The unaudited deficit of \$188,000, which includes amortization of \$215,000, is approximately \$27,000 better than anticipated. These savings are to be used towards future conservation projects. Staff have done a terrific job in bringing projects in at, or better than, budgeted costs.

Member municipalities should again be commended for their continued involvement and commitment to their local watershed.

2015 Sources of Revenue – Total Revenue: \$4,232,307



2015 Expenses – Total Expenses: \$4,420,348



Foundation updates Mandate; adopts new logo

By Bob Radtke, Chairman, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation (ABCF)

A subcommittee of the Board of Directors met in 2015 to update the *Mandate* document for the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation (ABCF). This document was last updated in 2003.

The Board of Directors adopted the new *Mandate* on December 18, 2015. As part of this update, the Foundation has also adopted a new logo. This wordmark better reflects the Foundation's relationship with Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA). This new logo carries on the oak leaf that has been the Foundation's visual identifier for many years. A local designer has created a new oak leaf image from a Red Oak leaf.

The guiding principles of the new *Mandate* are to: raise funds; foster partnerships; provide funds; and acquire conservation lands.

Junior Conservationist

The ABCF funds a two-month summer position for a senior secondary school student interested in pursuing a career in the environmental field.

Stirling Iredale, of the Exeter area, was chosen as the 2015 Junior Conservationist.



Stirling Iredale

Student Environmental Award

Four applications were received for the Student Environmental Award created by the ABCF for a student pursuing a career related to the environment. Barb Alber, from Exeter, was chosen to receive the \$1,000 scholarship. She attends Dalhousie University, hoping to become an educator.



Barb Alber receives 2015 Student Environmental Award from Bob Radtke.

Conservation Foundation



Protecting Wetland Habitat and Natural Areas

- Funding of \$1,500 for the turtle monitoring program in Grand Bend and Port Franks and \$500 towards the Ausable River Recovery outreach project and \$600 towards the aquatic species at risk signs in Ailsa Craig.
- Approved a grant for \$2,000 for the Lambton Shores Nature Trails group to create a stone-dust accessible trail at Ausable Cut Conservation Area.
- Funded a fisheries monitoring survey in Morrison Dam and Parkhill Dam reservoirs to identify fish species living in the reservoirs and compare to the survey done 10 years ago.

Accessible Trails, Conservation Areas

- Partnered with the Bayfield River Valley Trail Association to receive donations towards the Bayfield Tree Project.
- Organized the Tenth Annual South Huron Trail Golf Tournament raising \$4,263 in support of the proposed Pedestrian Bridge on the South Huron Trail.
- Partnered with a Grand Bend community group promoting an initiative to plant 5,000 trees by 2020 in response to the 2014 tornado.
- Received donations for upkeep of the South Huron Trailmobile.

Continued on next page

Foundation Board of Directors



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(Chairman)
Ailsa Craig



Anne Melady
(Vice Chair)
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Peter Darbshire
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Roger Lewington
Bayfield



Dave Crockett
St. Joseph



Tom Prout
Exeter



The Exeter Lions presented an award to the Conservation Dinner Committee and Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation and ABCA to recognize 25 years of partnership. From left to right are Conservation Dinner Committee Chair Paul Anstett; Janet Clarke, Past Dinner Chair and community volunteer; Brian Horner, General Manager, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA); Exeter Lions Club President Chris Keller; Bob Radtke, Chair, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation (ABCF); and Lions Club Multiple District A Council Chair Bob Tanner.

Conservation Dinner raises \$61,000 for trails, conservation areas, more

Continued from previous page

Conservation Dinner

The 26th Conservation Dinner reached a pinnacle in 2015 by raising \$61,000. This long-running event is a joint venture of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation (ABCF) and Exeter Lions Club in support of conservation area trail enhancements in the communities of Arkona, Port Franks, Parkhill, Clinton, Exeter, Zurich-Hensall, Bayfield, and Varna; the South Huron Trail; the fishing derby; and other recreation, conservation, and education projects.



From left to right, are: Anne Melady, Vice Chair of Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation; Jeremy Straw, Derby Chairman, Exeter Lions Club; Paul Scott, Exeter Lions Club; and Bruce Hodge, Exeter Lions Club. The derby takes place the first Saturday in May.

Morrison Dam Fishing Derby

Thanks to a donation of \$2,000 from the Exeter Lions Club and ABCF, more than 1,000 rainbow trout were stocked in the Morrison Dam Reservoir prior to the derby on the first Saturday of May. This was the 31st annual derby for the youth and young at heart.

Conservation Education

- The ABCF subsidized \$1 per student, for every watershed student participating in a conservation education program, with a contribution of \$2,082 to the conservation education department of Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority.
- A grant of \$1,000 covered the cost of installing canvas curtains to block the wind at the Morrison Dam Conservation Area pavilion, when it is being used as an outdoor classroom.
- Six watershed schools each received a \$70 grant covering the cost of snowshoe rentals to help students stay active and healthy in winter.

Commemorative Woods

- Co-hosted the 14th Klopp Commemorative Woods tree dedication service with J. M. McBeath Funeral Home on June 7, 2015 with 100 friends and families in attendance.
- Co-hosted the annual Commemorative Woods dedication service with Haskett Funeral Home on September 20, 2015 with 350 guests in attendance.
- Supports Ausable Bayfield Conservation staff to provide ongoing grounds maintenance of the five Commemorative Woods.

Mayhew family donates first land tract to land trust

By Roger Lewington, Chairman, Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy (HTLTC)

Mission:

Ensuring a land legacy.

Vision:

An inspired community that values and protects natural lands and habitat.

Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy



The Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy (HTLTC) was excited to receive its first donation of land to be preserved in perpetuity. It is a ten-acre forested parcel located in the Municipality of Central Huron on the corner of Tower Line and Parr Line. Greg Mayhew, Tim Mayhew, and Janine (Mayhew) Jones donated this family property to the HTLTC, ensuring the land legacy of their parents Jack and Iris Mayhew.

A dedication ceremony and sign unveiling was held at the Mayhew Tract on June 19, 2015. Greg Mayhew made these remarks on behalf of the family:

“First of all, I would like to thank everyone for coming today. I really expected this to be three guys standing in front of the sign, shaking hands for a photo opportunity. It’s great to see that there is a growing interest in environmental issues in the Huron County area.

Jack and Iris Mayhew farmed here for nearly 43 years. Jack farmed through an era where farming practices changed significantly. While many were clearing fencerows and doing whatever they could to gain every square inch of crop land, he was still planting trees and creating grassed waterways.

It was never really clear to me how this bush lot was connected to the original parcel that included the farm across the road, but it was not an ignored piece of land. The lot provided firewood, and was logged once. The cedar trees on the west side of the property were planted when I was still too young to ride on the tree planter. Every spring Iris would bring us down here to look for Pussy Willows, a spring ritual she carried on with her grandkids.

One of the last jobs I was working on here with

Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy



People came in cars and on bicycles to attend the dedication ceremony and sign unveiling for the Mayhew Tract near Holmesville. From left to right are Roger Lewington, Chairman, HTLTC; Tim Mayhew; Janine Jones; Greg Mayhew; and Nancy Mayhew. This forested property provides water storage, recharge, and habitat benefits. It was donated by the Mayhew family in memory of Jack and Iris Mayhew. Jack and Iris’s children, Janine, Tim, and Greg, attended along with other family members.

Jack was to create an area for a small cabin he was planning on putting in the middle of the lot.

He was an avid outdoorsman, and although he said he had no plans to shoot any more deer, he hoped to sit out here in the bush during the season and maybe get to see one go by. I think it may have been a good excuse to sit out in the woods.

This area is zoned as natural environment and is a natural drainage area. We have often seen such areas get rezoned and the natural habitat taken away. It is our hope that this land donation will preserve this lot in the natural state that Jack and Iris appreciated, and encourage others to see the value in our forested lands.”

* * *

The HTLTC is in its fifth year and the dedication of the Board and Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) staff advisors is appreciated.

As the community learns more about the Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy, we continue to get landowner requests for information on how their land and legacy can be preserved.

Huron Tract LTC
Board of Directors



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Burkhard Metzger
Clinton



David Kemp
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Philip Walden
Thedford



Tom McLaughlin
(Vice Chair)
Lucan



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AUSABLE BAYFIELD CONSERVATION

CREATING AWARENESS | TAKING ACTION

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