

# **Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority**

## **Master Plan Update Introduction**

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The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority owns 9,500 acres of land with most designated as Conservation Areas, Wildlife Management Areas, Management Areas and Managed Forests. To some extent, each property has a management plan to guide activities and land use.

Master plans are comprehensive documents to guide the management of conservation areas and wildlife management areas. Information includes species, land use and management practices. Forests that were part of the Ministry of Natural Resources Agreement Forest Program have older management plans that outline broad management objectives and little specific information about forest composition or management specifics. Information on the forests in Conservation Areas and Wildlife Management Area is within the conservation area master plans.

ABCA staff are concurrently updating the master plans and developing a forest management strategy.

### **A. Principles of ABCA property ownership and management**

The following principles are proposed to guide the ABCA in its property management.

ABCA property should:

1. Help conserve the watershed first and foremost in the areas of flood control, water quality, soil erosion control and wildlife habitat.
2. Comply with the goals of the Conservation Strategy, Watershed Strategy and Recovery Strategies.
3. Provide opportunities for education and recreation.
4. Be multiple-use if environmentally sustainable.
5. Contribute to a community and be a community asset.
6. Be managed in a sustainable manner.
7. Be examples of good stewardship.
8. Balance the needs of society and the environment.
9. Not depend on income generated within its boundaries.
10. Protect and enhance wildlife habitat, especially for those species identified as Species At Risk.
11. Be available for scientific use.

The ABCA should:

1. Attempt to fulfill the needs of watershed residents and residents of Ontario.
2. Partner with community groups and all levels of government to manage, maintain and fund its land holdings.
3. Use assets of the properties as income (tree harvests) to sustain all properties.

### **B. Master Plan Update**

ABCA master plans were developed as properties were purchased or in the 1970s. ABCA master plans need to be updated because much has changed since the 1980s.

- The Conservation Strategy and Watershed Management Strategy to guide its work in conserving the watershed resources were created following the last edition of the master plans.
- We have learned more on the form and function of subwatersheds and the role of ABCA properties in restoring a river system.
- The ABCA geographical information system is an excellent tool in assessing and managing the properties that didn't exist in the 1980s.
- People are relying on ABCA lands more for recreation and nature appreciation for a wide variety of uses. At the same time, preferred recreational activities have changed.
- Provincial funding for acquisition, development and maintenance has been reduced or eliminated. Field staff levels have been reduced and partnerships formed with community groups.

**These updates do not include drastic changes to management but reflect and incorporate the above issues and knowledge.**

This master plan update project includes:

- Clinton Conservation Area
- Bannockburn Wildlife Area
- Zurich Conservation Area
- Morrison Dam Conservation Area
- Crediton Conservation Area
- Lucan Conservation Area
- Parkhill Conservation Area
- Rock Glen Conservation Area
- Thedford Conservation Area and ABCA properties along the Ausable River Cut