

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE OF ISSUE: August 10, 2023

# Ausable Bayfield Conservation looks to future with new watershed strategy

*ABCA invites public to provide input into first phase of Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy to guide local conservation for years to come*

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) is preparing for the future of local conservation by creating a new watershed strategy. The local conservation organization is looking to the public to provide input into this plan to guide local watershed management beyond 2023.

The new strategy builds upon the work of the community to develop the *Conservation Strategy* (in 2011) and the work of staff to develop the previous *Watershed Management Strategy* in 2015.

A new *Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy* (WBRMS) will fulfil requirements of the *Conservation Authorities Act* (CA Act). It will also meet local needs to protect life and property from natural hazards and to manage and protect resources on a watershed basis.

Kate Monk is ABCA Projects Coordinator. She describes the new strategy as an “overarching document” that guides all of the conservation authority’s work with the watershed community. “This Strategy goes beyond a traditional watershed planning document,” she said. “It is also a business plan for ABCA that includes financial information. It identifies opportunities to engage landowners in the work needed to address issues facing our watershed communities. It also identifies opportunities to collaborate with other organizations.”

The Strategy will:

- Evaluate programs and recommend future programs and services to address watershed issues facing local communities.
- Identify infrastructure needs such as stream gauges, flood forecasting and warning communications, water and erosion control projects, and major maintenance of existing projects.
- Identify future studies and knowledge needs such as subwatershed studies, inventories, research, stormwater management plans.
- Include a business plan for delivering programs and services.
- Integrate climate change adaptation and resiliency into watershed management.
- Incorporate previous reports and studies.
- Meet the requirements of the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

The purpose of the *Conservation Authorities Act* is “... to provide for the organization and delivery of programs and services that further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources in watersheds in Ontario.”

The ABCA Board of Directors has approved release of the first part of the WBRMS document for public review. Interested people can review the first phase of the Strategy and provide feedback through a survey which includes spaces for written comments. The feedback period for the first phase of the document continues until September 15, 2023 at 1 p.m. This first phase of consultation includes the mission and vision statements, strategic priorities, guiding principles for decision-making, and objectives. The Strategy includes characterization of the watershed, setting priorities and objectives, evaluating progress made through the previous strategies, identifying gaps, and creating action plans.

To learn more about the WBRMS, people can visit the public consultation page (<https://www.abca.ca/involved/consultation/>) on the ABCA website (<https://www.abca.ca/>). If they have questions, they can contact staff by telephone at 519-235-2610 or toll-free 1-888-286-2610.

# About Ausable Bayfield Conservation

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) is an independent, corporate body in Southwestern Ontario on the southeast shores of Lake Huron. It is one of Ontario's 36 conservation authorities with the mandate to ensure the conservation, restoration and responsible management of Ontario's water, land and natural habitats through programs that balance human, environmental and economic needs.

ABCA is governed by the *Conservation Authorities Act* and has 12 member municipalities: Adelaide Metcalfe; Bluewater; Central Huron; Huron East; Lambton Shores; Lucan Biddulph; Middlesex Centre; North Middlesex; Perth South; South Huron; West Perth; and Warwick. It has a Board of Directors of nine representatives selected by the municipalities.

The 2,440-square-kilometre area of jurisdiction is largely rural with a population of 45,000 and includes the drainage basins of the Ausable River, Bayfield River, Parkhill Creek, Mud Creek and the gullies between Tower Line in Central Huron and Grand Bend draining directly to Lake Huron.

This conservation authority proudly carries the banner of being the first conservation authority formed in Ontario.

Municipalities in the Ausable River watershed formed the former Ausable River Conservation Authority (ARCA) in 1946 to deal with serious problems of local flooding, soil erosion, habitat loss, water supply, and water quality. The jurisdiction was enlarged to include the Bayfield River drainage basin and Lake Huron shoreline watersheds in 1972 and the organization's name was changed to Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority.

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