



## ANNUAL MEETING

**Thursday, February 19, 2026**

**Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Administration Centre  
Morrison Dam Conservation Area**

**10:00 a.m.**

### AGENDA

1. Chair's Welcome and Land Acknowledgement
2. Adoption of Agenda
3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest
4. Disclosure of intention to record this meeting by video and/or audio device
5. Adoption of Minutes from December 18, 2025
6. **Business Out of the Minutes**
  - Consolidation of Conservation Authorities Update – Davin Heinbuck
7. **Elections** (i) Appointment of Chair for Election  
(ii) Appointment of Scrutineers for Election  
(iii) Positions of Chair and Vice Chair declared vacant  
(iv) Election of Chair  
(v) Election of Vice Chair  
(vi) Motion to Destroy Ballots (if required)
8. **Appointments** (i) Solicitor
9. **Program Reports**
  - Report 1: (a) Development Review (O.Reg 41/24) – Jaden Schoelier  
(b) Violation/Appeals Update – Andrew Bicknell
  - Report 2: Permit Timelines Review – Andrew Bicknell
  - Report 3: ABCA Revised Fee Schedule – Andrew Bicknell
  - Report 4: Unaudited Profit/Loss Statement – Tina Crown
  - Report 5: Rock Glen 2025 Summary – Mike Bax
  - Report 6: Rock Glen Master Plan – Nathan Schoelier
  - Report 7: Ausable River Cut CA Master Plan – Nathan Schoelier
  - Report 8: Vehicle Tender – Nathan Schoelier
  - Report 9: Huronview Innovative Drainage Demonstration – Mari Veliz
10. **Committee Reports**
  - Striking Committee – Abbie Gutteridge
11. Correspondence
12. **Committee of the Whole** – *property matter*
13. New Business
14. Adjournment

*Source Protection Authority Meeting to follow*

### UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

March 26, 2026

Board of Directors Meeting at 2:30 p.m. Followed by Partner  
Appreciation Evening

April 9-16, 2026

36<sup>th</sup> Annual Conservation Auction - Online

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Boardroom  
Morrison Dam Conservation Area

### DIRECTORS PRESENT

Ray Chartrand, Adrian Cornelissen, Steve Herold, Jaden Hodgins, Dave Jewitt, Dave Marsh, Wayne Shipley, Marissa Vaughan

### DIRECTORS ABSENT

Joey Groot

### STAFF PRESENT

Andrew Bicknell, Tina Crown, Millie Ghorbankhani, Abbie Gutteridge, Davin Heinbuck, Brian Horner, Tracey McPherson, Jaden Schoelier, Nathan Schoelier, Mari Veliz, Ellen Westelaken

### OTHERS PRESENT

Adam Skillen, *Skillen Investment Management*

### CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ray Chartrand called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m., welcomed everyone in attendance, and read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

### ADOPTION OF AGENDA

**MOTION #BD 84/25**

Moved by Jaden Hodgins  
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan

**“RESOLVED, THAT the agenda for the December 18, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting be approved.”**

**Carried.**

**DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest at this meeting or from the previous meeting.

**DISCLOSURE OF INTENTION TO RECORD**

None.

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES****MOTION #BD 85/25**

**Moved by Wayne Shipley  
Seconded by Dave Jewitt**

**“RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Board of Directors meetings held on November 20, 2025 and the email vote from December 1, 2025, and the motions therein be approved as circulated.”**

**Carried.**

**BUSINESS OUT OF THE MINUTES**

Vote on 2026 Proposed Operating Levies (Category 1 and 3), Capital Levy, and Budget  
Davin Heinbuck, General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer, reviewed the process to date for the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Proposed 2026 Budget, and then reviewed the operating levies for both Category 1 and 3, as well as the Capital Levy, and advised that the approval is by weighted vote, based on those municipalities present to vote. He noted that the total proposed budget increase over 2025 is 3.93%.

**2026 Proposed Operating Levies and Capital Levy Vote****MOTION #BD 86/25**

**Moved by Wayne Shipley  
Seconded by David Jewitt**

**“RESOLVED, THAT the 2026 Operating Levy for Category 1 be approved at \$1,347,884.”**

	<u>Yea</u>	<u>Nay</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Adelaide Metcalfe	✓		
Bluewater			✓
Central Huron	✓		
Huron East	✓		
Lambton Shores	✓		
Lucan Biddulph	✓		

Middlesex Centre	✓
North Middlesex	✓
Perth South	✓
South Huron	✓
Warwick	✓
West Perth	✓

**“The result was Yea 100% based on the current value assessment apportionment schedule.”**

**Carried.**

**MOTION #BD 87/25**

**Moved by David Marsh  
Seconded by Steve Herold**

**“RESOLVED, THAT the 2026 Operating Levy for Category 3 be approved at \$168,056.”**

	<u>Yea</u>	<u>Nay</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Adelaide Metcalfe	✓		
Bluewater			✓
Central Huron	✓		
Huron East	✓		
Lambton Shores	✓		
Lucan Biddulph	✓		
Middlesex Centre	✓		
North Middlesex	✓		
Perth South	✓		
South Huron	✓		
Warwick	✓		
West Perth	✓		

**“The result was Yea 100% based on the current value assessment apportionment schedule.”**

**Carried.**

**MOTION #BD 88/25**

**Moved by Jaden Hodgins  
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan**

**“RESOLVED, THAT the 2026 Capital Levy be approved at \$40,095.**

	<u>Yea</u>	<u>Nay</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Adelaide Metcalfe	✓		
Bluewater			✓
Central Huron	✓		
Huron East	✓		
Lambton Shores	✓		
Lucan Biddulph	✓		
Middlesex Centre	✓		
North Middlesex	✓		
Perth South	✓		
South Huron	✓		
Warwick	✓		
West Perth	✓		

**“The result was Yea 100% based on the current value assessment apportionment schedule.”**

**Carried.**

#### 2026 Proposed Budget

**MOTION #BD 89/25**

**Moved by Marissa Vaughan  
Seconded by Adrian Cornelissen**

**“RESOLVED, THAT the proposed 2026 overall budget be approved.”**

**Carried.**

#### PRESENTATION

Adam Skillen, of Skillen Investment Management, presented a semi-annual update on the investment income since spring of 2025. The ABCA portfolio continues to perform well, despite an uncertain economic climate. However, he noted that the targets for bonds and equities have shifted over the past several months. In particular, there have been significant gains in equities, and that it is time to lock in these gains and rotate back to the targets of 65% bonds and 35% equities, as per the ABCA approved policy. Adam also noted that there was one significant withdrawal in 2025, which was for the purchase of the Spruce Tract. However, due to the gains realized in 2025, the withdrawal made very little impact on the portfolio.

PROGRAM REPORTS1. (a) Development Review

Jaden Schoelier, Water & Planning Technician, presented the Development Review report pursuant to Ontario Regulation 41/24 *Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits*. Through the application process, proposed developments within regulated areas are protected from flooding and erosion hazards. Staff granted permission for 9 *Applications for Permission* and 6 *Minor Works Applications*.

(b) Violation/Appeals Update

Andrew Bicknell provided a brief update regarding an appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT). He noted that this permit application for a deck and storage structure on the dynamic beach area came before the Board in a Hearing in July 2024, and was subsequently denied. The applicant filed an appeal at the OLT for both the ABCA and Municipality permits. There was a formal Hearing process in November that lasted for 6 days, and councils have now wrapped up and filed their summary statements. There has been no decision yet, but it is expected in the new year.

**MOTION #BD 90/25**

**Moved by Wayne Shipley  
Seconded by Jaden Hodgins**

**“RESOLVED, THAT the Board of Directors affirm the approval of applications as presented in Program Report # 1 – a) Development Review and receive the verbal Violations and Appeals update as presented.”**

**Carried.**

2. Ontario Regulation 41/24 Mapping Updates – Annual Review

Tracey McPherson, GIS/IT Supervisor, noted that in the ABCA’s annual review of mapping with respect to O. Reg. 41/24, two small updates were required. One was a reduction of 1.3 ha of regulated area along the McInroy Drain, and the second was an increase of 8.2 ha of regulated area along the Bayfield River tributaries in Stanley Township.

**MOTION #BD 91/25**

**Moved by David Marsh  
Seconded by Dave Jewitt**

**“RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the two mapping updates resulting from staff review as outline in the report Ontario Regulation 41/24 Mapping Updates – Annual Review.”**

**Carried.**

**GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

Davin Heinbuck, General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer, provided a report with a brief update on the progress of various projects, staff training, upcoming meetings and events, and general activities of ABCA staff.

**MOTION #BD 92/25**

**Moved by Marissa Vaughan  
Seconded by Steve Herold**

**"RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors receives the General Manager's Report for information as presented."**

**Carried.**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS****MOTION #BD 93/25**

**Moved by Jaden Hodgins  
Seconded by Wayne Shipley**

**"RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Source Protection Committee meeting held on October 22, 2025, and the motions therein be approved as circulated."**

**Carried.**

**MOTION #BD 94/25**

**Moved by Adrian Cornelissen  
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan**

**"RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Arkona Lions Club Museum Management Committee meeting held on November 4, 2025, and the motions therein be approved as circulated."**

**Carried.**

**CORRESPONDENCE**

- a) Reference: Various Conservation Authorities and Municipalities throughout Ontario  
File: A.5.1/A.5.2  
Brief: Resolutions and ERO submissions from many conservation authorities and municipalities in opposition to the proposed amalgamation of conservation authorities in Ontario.
- b) Reference: Support for Conservation Authorities from Local Organizations  
File: A.5.1

Brief: Letters from Southcott Pines Residents Association, Lakeshore Eco Network, Huron County Soil and Crop Association, and the Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy voicing support for keeping conservation local.

### NEW BUSINESS

1. Davin Heinbuck reported that the Province is holding regional meetings for each of the seven proposed Conservation Regions. ABCA staff attended the regional meeting in Collingwood, and Chair Ray attended the regional meeting held in London. They both noted that the Province is not committed to just seven regions and this number could expand somewhat. In general, he noted that there are still a lot of questions that have not been answered, but each authority office will continue to exist and be overseen by the region.
2. All Board members present noted that each municipality either had or planned to pass a resolution opposing the amalgamation of conservation authorities, and that they would be forthcoming.
3. Adrian Cornelissen asked Nathan Schoelier about the status of the proposed Parkhill Trails. Nathan noted that we have not yet reached our funding needed, but that staff have been applying to some smaller grants and understands that there is potential for municipal support.
4. Davin Heinbuck noted that the ABCA office would be officially closed from December 24 at noon until January 1, but that the office would remain closed to the public on January 2, 2026, as there would be very few staff in that day.
5. Davin Heinbuck reported that he recently attended CA University and was a speaker on the Budget Panel.
6. Matthew Rae, MPP for Perth-Wellington offered to meet with local conservation authorities in 2026 to hear their concerns.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

None.

### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Wayne Shipley at 4:01 p.m.

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Ray Chartrand  
Chair

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Abigail Gutteridge  
Secretary

*Copies of program reports are available upon request.  
Contact Abigail Gutteridge, Corporate Services Coordinator*



## ***ABCA Program Report***

**To:** Board of Directors  
**Date:** February 19, 2026  
**From:** Davin Heinbuck, General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer  
**Subject:** Regional Consolidation of Conservation Authorities – Responses and Communication  
**Report Type:** INFORMATION

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### **Recommendation:**

THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Board of Directors receives this update on responses and communications as it relates to Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) 025-1257: Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities, for information.

### **Background**

The ABCA has provided the following information supporting responses to the proposal to our members and their respective municipalities, as well as our partners and the public. Table 1, below, provides a summary of ABCA actions:

**Table 1. Summary of ABCA Actions**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
#LocalConservation campaign (22 Social Media Posts)	November-December 2025
Media Release – Proposed Consolidation	November 3, 2025
ABCA Board Special Meeting	November 6, 2025
Presentation to South Huron Council	November 17, 2025
Presentation to Huron East Council	November 18, 2025
ABCF Board Meeting	November 18, 2025
ABCA Board Meeting	November 20, 2025
Sample Resolution to Municipalities	November 26, 2025
ABCA Resolution	November 26, 2025
Media Release – ABCA Resolution and ERO Posting	December 3, 2025
Presentation to North Middlesex Council	December 3, 2025
ABCA ERO Submission	December 4, 2025
ROMA Ministers Forum – Sample Questions	January 13, 2026

The ABCA General Manager, Davin Heinbuck, together with Mari Veliz, Healthy Watersheds Manager, and Nathan Schoelier, Stewardship, Lands and Education Manager, attended the Proposed Huron-Superior regional consultation session in Collingwood, on December 8, 2025. ABCA Chair Ray Chartrand attended the Lake Erie regional session in London on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

### Local Responses and Submissions

As directed, the ABCA provided member municipalities with the ABCA Board resolution and a sample resolution for their use. The following table (Table 2) summarizes the Resolutions and ERO submissions to date as provided by member municipalities.

**Table 2. Summary of Member Municipality Actions**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
Township of Adelaide Metcalfe	Council direction for letter	December 15, 2025
Municipality of Bluewater	Resolution	December 3, 2025
Municipality of Central Huron	Resolution and Letter*	December 1, 2025
Municipality of Huron East	Resolution	December 16, 2026
Municipality of Lambton Shores	ERO Submission	Not Available
Township of Lucan Biddulph	Resolution	December 19, 2025
Municipality of Middlesex Centre	Resolution and ERO Submission	December 17, 2025
Municipality of North Middlesex	Resolution	December 17, 2025
Township of Perth South		
Municipality of South Huron	Resolution	December 18, 2025
Township of Warwick	Endorsement	December 15, 2025
Municipality of West Perth	Resolution	December 19, 2025

\*Central Huron letter to Hon. Lisa Thompson, MPP Huron-Bruce, December 16, 2025

### Other Responses and Submissions

No formal count of ERO Submissions has been shared to date; however, at the Lake Erie regional consultation session held in London December 12<sup>th</sup>, mention of 2500 submissions was provided anecdotally by MECP staff. ABCA is awaiting the decision posting on the ERO to confirm the number of submissions.

Conservation Ontario has received almost 130 Municipal Resolutions to date. Most submissions and resolutions are supportive of the Province's goals, but not the large-scale consolidations. We are aware of only Resolution in support of the proposed consolidation to 7 regions. The following table (Table 3) represents a selection of other organizations that have shared their ERO submissions and responses with conservation authorities, and ABCA directly.

**Table 3. Supporting Organization Actions**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
Lakeshore Eco-Network	ERO Submission	November 30, 2025
Ontario Society of Professional Engineers	ERO Submission	December 11, 2025
Federation of Ontario Cottagers Assoc.	ERO Submission	December 12, 2025
Ontario Municipal Insurance Association	Letter	December 16, 2025
Ontario Nature (94 Environmental Orgs.)	ERO Submission	December 17, 2025
Southcott Pines Park Association	ERO Submission	December 17, 2025
Drainage Superintendents Association Ontario	ERO Submission	December 22, 2025
Huron Soil and Crop Improvement Assoc.	Letter and ERO	December 22, 2025
National Farmers Union	ERO Submission	December 22, 2025
Joint Letter - 74 Environmental Professionals	ERO Submission	December 22, 2025
Lambton Shores Phragmite Community Group	ERO Submission	December 22, 2025
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)	Letter	December 24, 2025

**Continued Advocacy**

Since the closing of the ERO postings on December 22, 2025, communications have continued between CAs and municipalities, and watershed partners and residents. With the Ontario legislature not expected to resume until March 23, 2026, we encourage continued advocacy and consultation with our local MPP's, and where possible, with our partners.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and Conservation Ontario wrote a joint letter to the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks (attached to this report). The letter contains four recommendations to the Province on the consolidation of CAs, and can be used as a reference for ongoing and future engagement. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Establish an implementation working group to develop practical solutions to achieving the Province's objectives while maintaining local expertise, local oversight, and local relationships. Local municipal governance and oversight remain a priority.
2. Commit to a clear implementation timeline and transition plan supported by the implementation working group to position transformation for success. This will ensure continuity of service certainty for all stakeholders.
3. Share comprehensive financial, operational, and governance impact analysis to support evidence-based decision-making.
4. Restore a 50-50 municipal-provincial funding partnership for CAs, reflecting expanded Provincial role in CA operations, while ensuring affordability and long-term sustainability.

Reports will be provided to the Board as updates become available. We expect further opportunities for consultation will occur as draft legislation comes out this spring.

Sent by email to: [minister.mecp@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.mecp@ontario.ca)

December 24, 2025

The Honourable Todd McCarthy  
Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks  
5th Floor, 777 Bay Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

**Subject: Recommendations for Successful Conservation Authority Transformation**

Dear Minister McCarthy,

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario and Conservation Ontario are writing to provide joint feedback on ERO 025-1257 – Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities (CAs) complementing our respective and separate ERO submissions.

**We support the goals of this proposal.** Accelerating local approvals helps protect Ontario's economy amid global uncertainty. Faster, more predictable approvals, that maintain environmental protections and prioritize frontline conservation can unlock the new infrastructure and development required for a growing, competitive province.

**Municipal and local partnership is key to CA success.** The success of the CA model is local: expertise, governance, community trust, and partnerships. If regionalization results in structures that cover too large a geographic area, we risk losing what makes CAs effective:

- **Loss of local expertise:** Watershed-based CAs have extensive on-the-ground expertise and understanding of unique environmental conditions, enabling timely and effective decision-making on local development, and real-time responsiveness during storms and emergencies.
- **Loss of effective municipal oversight:** Municipal accountability and oversight help CAs effectively balance watershed management and community growth.
- **Loss of strong local relationships:** Key stakeholders (such as municipalities, Indigenous communities, businesses, the agricultural community, watershed residents, and other partners) provide funding, donations, and build public trust.

Over 100 municipalities have passed or are considering resolutions urging the Province to move forward by working together with municipalities and CAs to achieve provincial objectives while preserving local governance, accountability, and expertise.

AMO and CO propose a right-sized, simplified regional model that:

- is grounded in science-based watershed boundaries
- maintains strong municipal involvement and oversight
- preserves local relationships and community trust
- balances the need to stay connected at the community level with the needs of certainty, predictability, and consistency of service delivery standards for permitting and approvals
- avoids unnecessary complexity by allowing lands, major agreements (including employment), reserve funds etc. to remain within existing corporations

**To achieve this, AMO and CO recommend that the Province:**

1. Work together with an implementation working group (including AMO, Conservation Ontario and select CAs, municipal, developers, and Indigenous representatives) to jointly develop practical solutions, including:
  - service standards, permitting faster and standardized approvals
  - governance and boundary design
  - funding models, allocations, and reserve structures
  - shared “back office” efficiencies and,
  - clear transition planning including: service continuity; points of contact; permitting continuity measures; board and staff communications; and staff retention measures.
2. Commit to a clear implementation timeline and transition plan supported by the implementation working group to position transformation for success. This will ensure continuity of service certainty for all stakeholders.
3. Share comprehensive financial, operational, and governance impact analysis to support evidence-based decision-making.
4. Restore a 50-50 municipal-provincial funding partnership for CAs, reflecting expanded Provincial role in CA operations while ensuring affordability and long-term stability.

All stakeholders, including the development industry, benefit from certainty. This approach minimizes the risk of multiple significant changes occurring at the same time, limits disruption to program delivery, and creates conditions for better outcomes and buy-in.

Ministry McCarthy, we thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and look forward to discussing these concerns with you. Please contact Karen Nesbitt, Director of Policy and Government Relations at AMO ([knesbitt@amo.on.ca](mailto:knesbitt@amo.on.ca)), to arrange a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Robin Jones  
AMO President  
Mayor of the Village of Westport



Dave Barton  
Chair, Conservation Ontario  
Vice-Chair, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority  
Mayor, Township of Uxbridge

cc: The Honourable Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Sarah Harrison, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks  
Martha Greenberg, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

# ABCA Program Report

**To:** Board of Directors  
**Date:** February 19, 2026  
**From:** Andrew Bicknell, Manager of Water and Planning  
**Subject:** Applications for Permission  
Ontario Regulation 41/24 – Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits

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## Recommendation:

THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors affirm the approval of the permits issued by ABCA staff as outlined in the *Applications for Permission* Program Report.

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The following *Applications for Permission* have been issued by staff since the last Board of Directors Meeting.

\*A Coastal Assessment was provided as part of the application

\*\*Work commenced without a permit

## Major Permits

- (1) PERMIT #2025-67  
NAME: Marshall Boersma  
ADDRESS: 26670 Poplar Hill Road  
MUNICIPALITY: North Middlesex (East Williams)  
PERMISSION TO: Construct addition and reconstruct detached garage  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: December 1, 2025  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: December 8, 2025  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 5  
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier
- (2) PERMIT #2025-68  
NAME: Chris Drake  
ADDRESS: 71223 Anne Street, Dashwood  
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Hay)  
PERMISSION TO: Construct addition  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: November 27, 2025  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: December 17, 2025

NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 14  
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier

(3) PERMIT #2025-73  
NAME: Municipality of Middlesex Centre  
ADDRESS: McEwen Drive, approximately 0.8km southwest of Poplar Hill Road  
MUNICIPALITY: Middlesex Centre (Lobo)  
PERMISSION TO: Replace culvert structure  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: November 28, 2025  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: December 23, 2025  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 17  
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier

(4) PERMIT #2025-74  
NAME: Municipality of Middlesex Centre  
ADDRESS: Poplar Hill Road, approximately 0.3km northwest of McEwen Drive  
MUNICIPALITY: Middlesex Centre (Lobo)  
PERMISSION TO: Replace culvert structure  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: November 28, 2025  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: December 23, 2025  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 17  
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier

(5) PERMIT #2025-72  
NAME: Mark McCowan  
ADDRESS: 76475 Parr Line  
MUNICIPALITY: Central Huron (Goderich)  
PERMISSION TO: Build a storage shed  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: December 03, 2025  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: December 17, 2025  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 11  
STAFF NAME: Millie Ghorbankhani

(6) PERMIT #2026-01  
NAME: Municipality of Middlesex Centre  
ADDRESS: Fernhill Drive, approximately 1.1km northeast of Bear Creek Road  
MUNICIPALITY: Middlesex Centre (Lobo) & North Middlesex (East Williams)  
PERMISSION TO: Replace Culvert Structure

COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE:	January 5, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE:	January 14, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW:	7
STAFF NAME:	Jaden Schoelier

- (7) PERMIT #2026-02  
NAME: Municipality of South Huron  
ADDRESS: Road Allowance / Municipality owned lands adjacent Lot 24, Concession 1  
MUNICIPALITY: South Huron (Stephen)  
PERMISSION TO: Conduct road reconstruction and install stormwater outlet structure  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: January 13, 2026  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: January 14, 2026  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 1  
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier

## Minor Permits

- (1) PERMIT #MW2025-82  
NAME: Martin Jesko  
ADDRESS: 7908 Katherine Crescent, Port Franks  
MUNICIPALITY: Lambton Shores (Bosanquet)  
PERMISSION TO: Construct addition  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: November 26, 2025  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: December 12, 2025  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 12  
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier
- (2) PERMIT # MW2025-89-A through E, G  
NAME: Cedarbank Residents Association Inc. c/o Ed Gogol  
ADDRESS: "Block A Sand Beach" Old Cedar Bank Lane, Bluewater  
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Hay)  
PERMISSION TO: Repair groyne structures  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: December 4, 2025  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: December 9, 2025



- |      |  |                   |
|------|--|-------------------|
|      | NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW:                           | 3                 |
|      | STAFF NAME:  | Jaden Schoelier   |
| <br> |  |                   |
| (3)  | PERMIT #MW2025-89-F  |                   |
|      | NAME: Karen Mahon  |                   |
|      | ADDRESS: "Block A Sand Beach" Old Cedar Bank Lane, Bluewater |                   |
|      | MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Hay)                                |                   |
|      | PERMISSION TO: Repair groyne structure                       |                   |
|      | COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE:                      | December 4, 2025  |
|      | PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE:                            | December 9, 2025  |
|      | NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW:                           | 3                 |
|      | STAFF NAME:  | Jaden Schoelier   |
| <br> |  |                   |
| (4)  | PERMIT #MW2025-93  |                   |
|      | NAME: Nathan Meinen  |                   |
|      | ADDRESS: 39121 Dashwood Road, South Huron                    |                   |
|      | MUNICIPALITY: South Huron (Stephen)                          |                   |
|      | PERMISSION TO: Construct access to residence                 |                   |
|      | COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE:                      | December 15, 2025 |
|      | PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE:                            | December 17, 2025 |
|      | NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW:                           | 2                 |
|      | STAFF NAME:  | Jaden Schoelier   |
| <br> |  |                   |
| (5)  | PERMIT #MW2025-94  |                   |
|      | NAME: Municipality of South Huron c/o Mike Rolph, CBO        |                   |
|      | ADDRESS: 177 Centre Street South, Dashwood                   |                   |
|      | MUNICIPALITY: South Huron (Stephen)                          |                   |
|      | PERMISSION TO: Construct outlet for SWM Infrastructure       |                   |
|      | COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE:                      | December 22, 2025 |
|      | PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE:                            | December 23, 2025 |
|      | NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW:                           | 1                 |
|      | STAFF NAME:  | Jaden Schoelier   |
| <br> |  |                   |
| (6)  | PERMIT #MW2025-88  |                   |
|      | NAME: Royal Canadian Legion, Branch #498                     |                   |
|      | ADDRESS: 20 Municipal Drive, Grand Bend, Ontario             |                   |
|      | MUNICIPALITY: Lambton Shores (Bosanquet)                     |                   |
|      | PERMISSION TO: Place a truck trailer (8' x 48')              |                   |

COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE:	December 01, 2025
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE:	December 01, 2025
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW:	1
STAFF NAME:	Millie Ghorbankhani

(7) PERMIT #MW2025-90  
NAME: Sherry Simon  
ADDRESS: 9936 Prince Phillip Street, Thedford  
MUNICIPALITY: Lambton Shores (Bosanquet)  
PERMISSION TO: Build a deck  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: November 20, 2025  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: December 03, 2025  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 10  
STAFF NAME: Millie Ghorbankhani

(8) PERMIT #MW2025-91  
NAME: Timothy & Jocelyn Klopp  
ADDRESS: 37550 Zurich-Hensall Road  
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Hay)  
PERMISSION TO: Build a barn  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: December 11, 2025  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: December 12, 2025  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 2  
STAFF NAME: Millie Ghorbankhani

(9) PERMIT #MW2025-92  
NAME: Gunnar & Laurie Lindberg  
ADDRESS: 72822 Cantin Court  
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Hay)  
PERMISSION TO: Build a shed  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: December 11, 2025  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: December 16, 2025  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 4  
STAFF NAME: Millie Ghorbankhani

(10) PERMIT #MW2026-02  
NAME: Brad Boere  
ADDRESS: Paul Bunyan Lake Front Resort – Lot No. 400– 75559 Lidderdale Street, Bayfield

MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Stanley)  
PERMISSION TO: Replace Trailer Unit  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: January 8, 2026  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: January 12, 2026  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 2  
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier

(11) PERMIT #MW2026-01  
NAME: Tyler Tenpas  
ADDRESS: 80 Mill Road East  
MUNICIPALITY: Huron East (Tuckersmith)  
PERMISSION TO: replace a septic system  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: December 11, 2025  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: January 09, 2026  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 15  
STAFF NAME: Millie Ghorbankhani

(12) PERMIT #MW2026-03  
NAME: Scott Rourke  
ADDRESS: 7467 Sanderson Road  
MUNICIPALITY: Lambton Shores (Bosanquet)  
PERMISSION TO: replace a septic system  
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: January 08, 2026  
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: January 21, 2026  
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 10  
STAFF NAME: Millie Ghorbankhani

# *ABCA Program Report*

**To:** Board of Directors  
**Date:** February 19, 2026  
**From:** Andrew Bicknell, Manager of Water and Planning  
**Subject:** 2025 Permit Review Timelines  
O.Reg. 41/24 – Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits  
**Report Type:** INFORMATION

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This report is for information only.

Changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and Ontario Regulation 41/24 requires the production of an annual report which summarizes the Authority's permit review timelines.

That report is attached for the Board's information. It is a summary of the monthly reports already provided to the Board. The data is presented in a format provided by Conservation Ontario. The attached chart will also be posted to the ABCA's website.

The report confirms that staff of the ABCA continue to accel at bettering expected permit review timelines. Staff processed 97% of the permits issued well before the time limit.

Attachment:  
ABCA 2025 Permit Compliance Reporting

## ABCA 2025 Permit Compliance Reporting

Annual Reporting – Permit Statistics	
<b>Total Permits Issued (Overall)</b> (January 1 – December 31):	167
<b>Total Major Permits Issued</b> (January 1 – December 31):	77
<b>Total Minor Permits Issued</b> (January 1 – December 31):	90
<b>Total Applications Subject to Minister’s Order (Minister’s Review):</b>	0
Annual Reporting – Permit Timelines	
<b>COMPLETE APPLICATION REVIEW</b> Total complete application reviews completed in 21 days:	167
<b>PERMIT TIMELINES (MAJOR)</b> Total Major Permits Issued <u>Within</u> Decision Timeline (90 Days):	77
<b>PERMIT TIMELINES (MAJOR)</b> Total Major Permits Issued <u>Outside</u> Decision Timeline (90 Days):	0
<b>PERMIT TIMELINES (MINOR)</b> Total Minor Permits Issued <u>Within</u> Decision Timeline (30 Days):	90
<b>PERMIT TIMELINES (MINOR)</b> Total Minor Permits Issued <u>Outside</u> Decision Timeline (30 Days):	0
<b>VARIANCE FROM TIMELINES</b> Reason for Variance from Timelines (Optional):	<b>Commentary:</b> exceedance is due to staff loss and subsequent transition
<b>PERMIT TIMELINES (AVERAGE – ALL)</b> Overall Average Permit Review Timeline ():	9.2 days
<b>PERMIT TIMELINES (AVERAGE – MAJOR – 90 DAYS)</b> Average Major Permit Review Timeline:	12.8 days
<b>PERMIT TIMELINES (AVERAGE – MINOR – 30 DAYS)</b> Average Minor Permit Review Timeline:	6.2 days

Annual Reporting – Compliance with O. Reg. 41/24	
<b>MAPPING</b> Are maps of regulated areas available at the CA head office and on the CA website? (ss. 4(1) of O. Reg. 41/24) (Yes / No)	Yes
<b>MAPPING</b> Has the Authority undertaken an annual review of the mapping and made necessary updates? (ss. 4(2) of O. Reg. 41/24) (Yes / No)	Yes
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS</b> Total requests for administrative reviews made to the Authority:	0
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS</b> Total administrative reviews completed within 30 days of the request:	0

# ***ABCA Program Report***

**To: Board of Directors**  
**Date: February 19, 2026**  
**From: Andrew Bicknell, Manager of Water and Planning**  
**Subject: ABCA Revised Fee Schedule – Planning and Permitting Fees**  
**Report Type: ACTION REQUIRED**

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## **Recommendation:**

THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Board of Directors approves the revised 2026 Fee Schedule which includes updates to the ABCA Planning and Permitting fees; and,

THAT, the revised 2026 Fee Schedule changes be implemented immediately; and,

THAT, the revised 2026 Fee Schedule be posted on the ABCA website, as approved.

## **Background**

On January 1, 2023 the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry issued a Minister's Direction which froze Planning and Regulations fees charged by all Conservation Authorities in the province for a period of one year. Subsequent directions extended this freeze through 2024, and again through December 31, 2025. Planning and Permitting fees were approved in the fall of 2022 specific to 2023 fees (Motion BD 106/22) and have remained unchanged since 2023.

At the time of the 2026 budget preparations, it was expected that the provincial direction freezing Planning and Regulations fees would be extended through 2026. Based on this, no changes to ABCA planning and permitting fees were included in the approved 2026 Fee Schedule last fall (Motion BD 81/25).

To date, ABCA has not received direction from the Province with regard to a freeze on Planning and Regulations fees for 2026. With no letter of direction to continue the fee freeze, the majority of CAs have or plan to update their Fee Schedule with an increase in Planning and Regulations fees following a user-pay model in order to maintain a sustainable revenue source and high level of service. Through discussions with Conservation Ontario and the CA network, fees approved or being proposed by other conservation authorities generally reflect a COLA ranging from 2-8% depending on how COLA was considered over the three years of frozen fees. The ABCA yearly COLA allowance, over the three year period was 2%, 2.5%, and 2.5%.

With respect to Planning and Permitting fees, the ABCA as a rule, has kept our fees consistent with other CA's in southern Ontario, and more closely tied to our neighbouring CAs. ABCA considers cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) and other initiatives, to ensure consistency with the recovery targets identified in our fees policy.

The ABCA's Planning and Regulations fees are overdue for an increase and are impacting ABCA's budget. A fees increase is proposed affecting the majority of fee categories to be implemented immediately. The suggested fee increase reported as a percentage (based on the aggregate of all planning and regulations fee categories) amounts to approximately 4 % which is below the COLA over the 3 years since 2023. The proposed fee changes are provided in the highlighted portion of the attached Table 2 , "Proposed 2026 Fee Schedule".

The proposed fee increases (over many categories) has been reviewed to ensure consistency with the "ABCA Fee Policy, 2022". Based on policy, inflationary adjustments can be made without formal consultation.

It is important to note, the "ABCA Fee Policy, 2022" provides a 50% cost recovery target. Budget numbers for 2025 for the regulations ( permitting ) and planning programs (5135, 5139, 5138) show a shortfall in revenues, and that the ABCA has not met the cost recovery target. Based on estimated 2025 year end numbers, the shortfall is approximately \$59,000.

Table 1 offers a comparison of fees revenue based on the current fee schedule vs. the proposed adjusted fees for a typical range of permit and planning review and fee categories. The comparison chart is based on an estimate of the actual number of reviews completed in 2025, over select permitting and planning categories.

The results show that with the implementation of the suggested fees increase, based on the number of permitting and planning file reviews remaining constant, future additional revenues totalling \$1,970 (Planning ) and \$4,220 (Permitting) can be realized.

**Attachments:**

Table 1 – Estimated Increase in Fees Revenue (based on 2025 numbers) with proposed fee adjustments applied

Table 2 – Proposed 2026 Fee Schedule (highlighted portion, only)



Table 1

Estimated Increase in Fees Revenue (based on 2025 numbers)

With Proposed Fee Adjustments Applied

Planning / Inquiry Fees - Comparison (2025 Actual Fees vs. Proposed 2026 Fees)

Application Type	Number of applications	Current Fee	2025 Actuals	Proposed Fee	Revised Fees
Severance	40	\$275	\$11,000	\$290	\$11,600
Minor Variance	27	\$175	\$4,725	\$190	\$5,130
Zoning By-law Amendment	28	\$175	\$4,900	\$185	\$5,180
Site Plan Application	10	\$300	\$3,000	\$310	\$3,100
Official Plan Amendment	4	\$225	\$900	\$240	\$960
Lawyer's Inquiry	17	\$250	\$4,250	\$265	\$4,505
	18	\$175	\$3,150	\$190	\$3,420
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>		<b>\$31,925</b>		<b>\$33,895</b>
Additional Revenue :					<b>\$1,970</b>

Regulations / Permitting Fees - Comparison (2025 Actual Fees vs. Proposed 2026 Fees)

Application Type	Number of applications	Current fee	2025 Actuals	Proposed Fee	Revised Fees
Major work - Level 1	14	\$775	\$10,850	\$815	\$11,410
	3	\$1,100	\$3,300	\$1,150	\$3,450
Major work - Level 2	48	\$500	\$24,000	\$525	\$25,200
Major work - Renewal	12	\$100	\$1,200	\$105	\$1,260
Minor work	90	\$200.00	\$18,000	\$225	\$20,250
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>		<b>\$57,350</b>		<b>\$61,570</b>
Additional Revenue :					<b>\$4,220</b>

Table 2 Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority

## Proposed 2026 Fee Schedule

For Internal Use

Category	Item #	Item Name	Description	2025 Fee	2026 Fee	HST	Total 2026	Increase \$	Increase	
						13%				
LEVY, Municipal	1210	Municipal Levy			TBD					
LEASE	1310	Parkhill Campground Lease	Determined by Contract							
	1320	Property Lease, Farm Land	Determined by Contract							
RENT, Office	1330	Rental, Boardroom/Meeting		\$50.00	\$100.00	\$13.00	\$113.00	\$50.00	X	
	1670-01	Rental, Boardroom Coffee		\$5.00	\$5.00	\$0.65	\$5.65	\$0.00		
	1510-01	Gate Fees, Individual		\$3.76	\$3.76	\$0.49	\$4.25	\$0.00		
CONS AREAS	1510-02	Gate Fees, Student Groups		\$2.88	\$2.88	\$0.37	\$3.25	\$0.00		
Gate Fees	1510-05	Gate Fees, Event: minimum charge \$212.50	minimum 50 people	188.05	\$188.05	\$24.45	\$212.50	\$0.00		
	1510-04	Gate Fees, Commercial Photos		\$57.52	\$57.52	\$7.48	\$65.00	\$0.00		
	1520-01	Conservation Areas Pass, Family		\$46.46	\$46.46	\$6.04	\$52.50	\$0.00		
	1520-02	Conservation Areas Pass, Individual		\$30.97	\$30.97	\$4.03	\$35.00	\$0.00		
CONS AREAS	1520-03	Super Pass, Family		\$69.69	\$69.69	\$9.06	\$78.75	\$0.00		
Passes	1520-04	Super Pass, Individual		\$46.46	\$46.46	\$6.04	\$52.50	\$0.00		
	1520-05	Trapping Permit		\$30.97	\$30.97	\$4.03	\$35.00	\$0.00		
CONS AREAS	1530-01	Pavilion Rental A		\$30.00	\$30.00	\$3.90	\$33.90	\$0.00		
Pavilion Rental	1530-02	Pavilion Rental B		\$45.00	\$45.00	\$5.85	\$50.85	\$0.00		
	1540-01	US Exchange	reviewed annually							
CONS AREAS	1540-02	C.A. Sundry	determined by cost of item							
Sundry	1550-20	Candy, Ice Cream/Pop	determined by cost of item							
	1640-20	Herbicide, Row Application	*minimum chg \$400	\$0.40	\$0.40	\$0.05	\$0.45	\$0.00		
	1640-21	Herbicide, Backpack Application	*minimum chg \$400	\$0.60	\$0.60	\$0.08	\$0.68	\$0.00		
	1640-35	Minimum Herbicide Fee		\$350.00	\$400.00	\$52.00	\$452.00	\$50.00	X	
	1640-22	Machine Tree Planting, Seedlings	*minimum chg \$1000	\$0.80	\$0.85	\$0.11	\$0.96	\$0.05	X	
	1640-23	Tree Planting, Large Stock	*minimum chg \$1000	\$20.00	\$22.50	\$2.93	\$25.43	\$2.50	X	
	1640-37	Hand Tree Planting, Seedlings	*minimum chg \$1000	\$1.65	\$2.00	\$0.26	\$2.26	\$0.35	X	
TECH FEES,	1640-38	Tree Planting, 2' B&B or Potted Stock	*minimum chg \$1000	\$9.00	\$10.00	\$1.30	\$11.30	\$1.00	X	
Stewardship	1640-34	Minimum Planting Fee		\$950.00	\$1,000.00	\$130.00	\$1,130.00	\$50.00	X	
	1640-33	Tree Planting Plan		\$250.00	\$250.00	\$32.50	\$282.50	\$0.00		
	1640-24	Forest Management Plan	\$20 per acre, minimum \$1000	\$950.00	\$1,000.00	\$130.00	\$1,130.00	\$50.00	X	
	<del>1640-25</del>	<del>Woodlot Marking</del>	<del>\$65 per acre, minimum \$950</del>	<del>\$950.00</del>	<del>\$950.00</del>	<del>\$123.50</del>	<del>\$1,073.50</del>	<del>\$0.00</del>		
	1640-29	Technical Service - Stewardship	per hour	\$66.37	\$75.00	\$9.75	\$84.75	\$8.63	X	
	1640-30	Technical Service - Invasive Species Management	tech fee plus herbicide	TBD	\$75.00	\$9.75	<b>\$84.75</b>	\$75.00	X	
	<del>1640-31</del>	<del>Technical Service - Erosion Control</del>	<del>per hour</del>	<del>\$66.37</del>	<del>\$66.37</del>	<del>\$8.63</del>	<del>\$75.00</del>	<del>\$0.00</del>		
	1640-40	Hand Planting Plugs	*minimum chg \$1000	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$0.46	\$3.96	\$0.00		
PRODUCTS,	1650-22	Tree Signs		\$3.00	\$3.00	\$0.39	\$3.39	\$0.00		
Stewardship	1650-25	Tree Wrap Rodent Guard		\$3.00	\$3.00	\$0.39	\$3.39	\$0.00		
	1650-26	Wooden 2x2 tree stake		\$2.50	\$2.50	\$0.33	\$2.83	\$0.00		
<i>(Commercial Renewable Energy Projects are 2 times the standard fee)</i>										
	1620-01	Reg 41/24, 1 Residential L1, <2500 sq ft	For structures less than 2500 sq ft (as measured externally)	\$775.00	\$815.00	\$0.00	\$815.00	\$40.00	x	
	1620-13	Reg 41/24, 1 Residential L1, >2500 sq ft	For structures greater than 2500 sq ft (measured externally)	\$1,100.00	\$1,150.00	\$0.00	\$1,150.00	\$50.00	x	
	1620-02	Reg 41/24, 2-4 units		\$1,375.00	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$125.00	x	
PERMITS, Fill Regs	1620-03	Reg 41/24, Renewal/Transfer		\$100.00	\$105.00	\$0.00	\$105.00	\$5.00	x	
	1620-04	Reg 41/24, Survey	Minimum to collect info to assess application	\$350.00	\$360.00	\$0.00	\$360.00	\$10.00	x	
	1620-05	Reg 41/24, Violation Surcharge	Violator offered option to apply for permit. Double for recurring offences	\$400-\$1550	\$450-\$1,630	\$0.00	\$450-\$1,630	\$0.00	x	
	1620-06	Reg 41/24, Minor Works App		\$200.00	\$225.00	\$0.00	\$225.00	\$25.00	x	
Municipalities receive	1620-07	Reg 41/24, Hearing	Applicant requests special hearing with Full Board	\$2,000.00	\$2,050.00	\$0.00	\$2,050.00	\$50.00	x	

Category	Item #	Item Name	Description	2025 Fee	2026 Fee	HST	Total 2026	Increase \$	Increase	
2 apps free/year	1620-08	Reg 41/24, 1 or 2 Residential L2		\$500.00	\$525.00	\$0.00	\$525.00	\$25.00	x	
	1620-09	Reg 41/24, 5-15 units		\$2,750.00	\$2,850.00	\$0.00	\$2,850.00	\$100.00	x	
	1620-10	Reg 41/24, 16-45 units		\$4,125.00	\$4,250.00	\$0.00	\$4,250.00	\$125.00	x	
	1620-11	Reg 41/24, 46 units and higher		\$5,500.00	\$5,650.00	\$0.00	\$5,650.00	\$150.00	x	
	1620-14	D.A.R.T. Protocol: Drain Mtce Review Fee		\$150.00	\$150.00	\$0.00	\$150.00	\$0.00		
(Commercial Renewable Energy Projects are 2 times the standard fee)										
TECH FEES, Planning	1640-01	Reg 41/24, Written Inquiry		\$175.00	\$190.00	\$0.00	\$190.00	\$15.00	x	
	1640-02	Reg 41/24 Written Inquiry	Where response requested in less than 10 working days	\$250.00	\$265.00	\$0.00	\$265.00	\$15.00	x	
	1640-03	Reg 41/24, Minor Survey		\$110.00	\$115.00	\$0.00	\$115.00	\$5.00	x	
	1640-04	Reg 41/24, Site Visit		\$66.37	\$75.00	\$9.75	\$84.75	\$8.63	x	
	1640-05	Reg 41/24, Drain Review		\$450.00	\$450.00	\$0.00	\$450.00	\$0.00		
	1640-07	Plan Inp, Official Plan Amend		\$225.00	\$240.00	\$0.00	\$240.00	\$15.00	x	
	1640-08	Plan Inp, Zoning By-Law Amend		\$175.00	\$185.00	\$0.00	\$185.00	\$10.00	x	
	1640-09	Plan Inp, Severance Consent		\$275.00	\$290.00	\$0.00	\$290.00	\$15.00	x	
	1640-10	Plan Inp, Minor Variance		\$175.00	\$190.00	\$0.00	\$190.00	\$15.00	x	
	1640-11	Plan Inp, Dr Plan Subdivision	Per Lot or Residential Unit	\$60.00	\$65.00	\$0.00	\$65.00	\$5.00	x	
	1640-12	Plan Inp, Dr Plan Condominium	Per Lot or Residential Unit	\$60.00	\$65.00	\$0.00	\$65.00	\$5.00	x	
	1640-13	Plan Inp, Site Plan App	Per Lot or Residential Unit	\$60.00	\$65.00	\$0.00	\$65.00	\$5.00	x	
	1640-14	Tech Clearance, Site Plan		\$300.00	\$310.00	\$0.00	\$310.00	\$10.00	x	
	1640-15	Tech Clearance EIS, Scoped Site		\$400.00	\$410.00	\$0.00	\$410.00	\$10.00	x	
	1640-16	Tech Clearance EIS, Full Site	For natural heritage or natural hazard	\$600.00	\$615.00	\$0.00	\$615.00	\$15.00	x	
	1640-17	Tech Clearance Tributary Study	Subwatershed Study/Master Drainage Plan	\$600.00	\$615.00	\$0.00	\$615.00	\$15.00	x	
	1640-18	Tech Clearance, Stormwater Mg	Includes review of all phases of SWM plans for preliminary or conceptual to final engineering design (Quality, Quantity, & Sediment & Erosion Control)	\$1,250.00	\$1,350.00	\$0.00	\$1,350.00	\$100.00	x	
	1640-19	Technical Service Fee	per hour	\$66.37	\$66.37	\$8.63	\$75.00	\$0.00		
PRODUCTS, Planning	1650-08	Reports	Includes SMP,WRC,etc. Any reports produced by ABCA staff & reprinted	\$39.82	\$39.82	\$5.18	\$45.00	\$0.00		
	<del>1650-09</del>	<del>HECH/HYMO Info-Diskette</del>	<del>Disk-containing HECH or HYMO Info-or-Stream-Flow/Precipitation/Weather Data</del>	<del>\$66.37</del>	<del>\$66.37</del>	<del>\$8.63</del>	<del>\$75.00</del>	<del>\$0.00</del>		
	<del>1650-10</del>	<del>Stream Flow/Precip Data</del>	<del>per page</del>	<del>\$12.39</del>	<del>\$12.39</del>	<del>\$1.61</del>	<del>\$14.00</del>	\$0.00		
	1640-32	Digital Mapping, Tech Time	per hour	\$66.37	\$66.37	\$8.63	\$75.00	\$0.00		
	1640-39	Data Retrieval, Tech Time	per hour - min 1 hour	\$66.37	\$66.37	\$8.63	\$75.00	\$0.00		
	1650-12	Aerial Photo (2007), 10 cm, Lake Huron Shore, Digital File	per 500m x 500m tile	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$3.25	\$28.25	\$0.00		
	1650-13	Lake Huron Shore Digital Vector Data including elevation data	per 500m x 500m tile	\$75.00	\$75.00	\$9.75	\$84.75	\$0.00		
	1650-14	Digital Air Photo, 2006,2010,2015 Colour	per 1 km x 1 km tile	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$2.60	\$22.60	\$0.00		
	1650-15	Aerial Photo, Digital Historic Scan		\$11.00	\$11.00	\$1.43	\$12.43	\$0.00		
	1650-16	Aerial Photo/Other Large Plot, per sq ft		\$4.00	\$4.00	\$0.52	\$4.52	\$0.00		
	1650-17	Aerial Photo, Colour Laser Output	maximum 11" x 17"	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$2.60	\$22.60	\$0.00		
	1650-19	Aerial Photo, Glossy Paper Additional Charge	large format plot	\$28.00	\$28.00	\$3.64	\$31.64	\$0.00		
	1650-31	Aerial Photo (2020), 15 cm, Digital File	per 1 km x 1 km tile, plus Admin fee if applicable	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$6.50	\$56.50	\$0.00		
	1630-06	Field Trip School Program Half Day	Per Student - min 17 students one 2 hr program	\$7.52	\$7.52	\$0.98	\$8.50	\$0.00		
	1630-07	Field Trip School Program Full Day	Per Student - min 17 students one 2 hr program	\$13.27	\$13.27	\$1.73	\$15.00	\$0.00		
	1630-23	MVCA In School/School-yard	Per Day	\$420.35	\$420.35	\$54.65	\$475.00	\$0.00		
	1630-24	Virtual Ed Program	Per Class	\$92.92	\$92.92	\$12.08	\$105.00	\$0.00		
TECH FEES, Education	1630-25	In School/School-yard	Per Day	\$331.86	\$331.86	\$43.14	\$375.00	\$0.00		
	1630-26	In School/School-yard	Per Program	\$111.50	\$111.50	\$14.50	\$126.00	\$0.00		
	1630-08	Program Oaks & Acorns	2hrs per session for 4 wks	\$74.34	\$74.34	\$9.66	\$84.00	\$0.00		
	1630-14	Program, Non Profit Groups	1.5-2 hour Ed program	\$111.50	\$111.50	\$14.50	\$126.00	\$0.00		

Category	Item #	Item Name	Description	2025 Fee	2026 Fee	HST	Total 2026	Increase \$	Increase	
PRODUCTS, Education	1630-10	Day Camp: 1 day	Per Child	\$39.82	\$39.82	\$5.18	\$45.00	\$0.00		
	1630-13	Day Camp: all ages	Per Child - 5 day program	\$199.12	\$199.12	\$25.88	\$225.00	\$0.00		
	1630-27	Science Outdoors! Ed Program	3 hrs per session for 6 wks	\$167.26	\$167.26	\$21.74	\$189.00	(\$0.00)		
	1630-28	Outdoor School Ed Program	6 hrs per session for 6 wks	\$334.51	\$334.51	\$43.49	\$378.00	\$0.00		
	1650-05	Bluebird or Bat or Butterfly Box	Price per kit	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$2.60	\$22.60	\$0.00		
	1650-06	Bird Box or Bat Box Assembled	Price per assembled box	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$3.90	\$33.90	\$0.00		
	1350-01	Snowshoe Rental	Per pair	\$4.88	\$4.88	\$0.63	\$5.51	(\$0.00)		
	1350-04	Snowshoe Rental - Weekend	Per pair	\$10.22	\$10.22	\$1.33	\$11.55	\$0.00		
	1350-02	Snowshoe Rental	Set of up to 30 pairs	\$83.63	\$83.63	\$10.87	\$94.50	(\$0.00)		
	1350-04	Science Kit Rental	Per kit per week	\$44.25	\$44.25	\$5.75	\$50.00	\$0.00		
OFFICE ADMINISTRATION	1670-05	Shipping/Handling: Regular Mail		\$5.10	\$5.10	\$0.66	\$5.76	(\$0.00)		
	1670-05	Shipping/Handling: Courier		\$15.30	\$15.30	\$1.99	\$17.29	\$0.00		
	1670-02	Photocopies, Colour	per page	\$0.18	\$0.18	\$0.02	\$0.20	\$0.00		
	1670-14	Photocopies, Black	per page	\$0.09	\$0.09	\$0.01	\$0.10	\$0.00		
	1670-03	Fax	per page	\$0.09	\$0.09	\$0.01	\$0.10	\$0.00		
	1670-06	Document Scan/Copy (MFIPPA)	plus tech time \$60 per hr	\$2.04	\$2.04	\$0.27	\$2.31	(\$0.00)		
	1670-16	Freedom of Information	Labour only, per hr. Need to add copy charge on to fee.	\$30.60	\$30.60	\$3.98	\$34.58	\$0.00		
	1670-11	Laminating, letter size	per sheet	\$0.77	\$0.77	\$0.10	\$0.87	\$0.00		
	1670-12	Laminating, legal size	per sheet	\$1.02	\$1.02	\$0.13	\$1.15	(\$0.00)		
	1670-15	Laminating, ledger size	per sheet	\$1.53	\$1.53	\$0.20	\$1.73	\$0.00		
OTHER	2100	Donations	apply to program as required							
FOUNDATION	1650-04	River and the Rocks		\$8.50	\$8.50	\$0.00	\$8.50	\$0.00		

Per Diem:	Board of Directors	\$102.25	per meeting + CPI of 2.5% =	\$	104.81
	Source Protection Authority	\$102.25	per meeting + CPI of 2.5% =	\$	104.81
	Joint Management Committee	\$102.25	per meeting + CPI of 2.5% =	\$	104.81
	Source Protection Committee	\$170.41	per 1/2 day + CPI of 2.5% =	\$	174.67
	Source Protection Committee	\$245.40	per full day + CPI of 2.5% =	\$	251.54

Honourarium:	Chairman	\$1,294	per year
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## Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority

71108 Morrison Line, RR 3

Exeter, ON N0M 1S5

### Statement of Profit & Loss

January through December

(Unaudited)

Accrual Basis

Table 1: Consolidated

	2024	2025				
	Actual Twelve Months	Six Months January to June	Six Months July to December	TOTAL Twelve months	Budget	% of Budget
<b>Revenue</b>						
Grants and Contributions	1,979,398	1,043,400	882,514	1,925,914	1,352,597	142%
Operating Levy - Category 1	1,076,874	564,289	564,290	1,128,579	1,128,580	100%
Operating Levy - Category 1 Projects	199,773	88,014	88,013	176,027	176,025	100%
Operating Levy - Category 3	163,976	86,309	86,308	172,617	172,616	100%
Levy, Capital	0	10,024	10,021	20,045	20,045	0%
Levy, Special Benefit	91,053	0	93,959	93,959	93,961	100%
Rental	69,062	41,549	32,281	73,830	60,587	122%
Conservation Area User Fees	176,487	47,102	142,435	189,536	142,600	133%
Sales & Service	855,783	527,250	454,267	981,517	832,080	118%
Donations	2,588	12,643	4,231	16,874	1,000	1687%
Interest	72,710	30,776	24,588	55,364	79,000	70%
Sundry	564	0	75	75	0	0%
Deferred from Prior Year - Revenue	1,198,470	1,268,133	0	1,268,133	1,088,885	116%
Deferred to Future Year - Expense	(1,268,133)	0	(1,328,622)	(1,328,622)	(505,790)	263%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>4,618,603</b>	<b>3,719,489</b>	<b>1,054,361</b>	<b>4,773,849</b>	<b>4,642,186</b>	<b>103%</b>
<b>Expense</b>						
Purchased Services	401,745	167,121	233,868	400,988	450,825	89%
Advertising	10,092	3,790	2,566	6,356	8,283	77%
Bad Debts	2	0	10	10	0	0%
Memberships, Dues, Licenses	59,448	39,385	27,484	66,868	63,509	105%
Maintenance and Repair	31,565	24,211	14,504	38,715	25,395	152%
Property Taxes	51,891	25,167	26,730	51,897	55,000	94%
Office Operations	132,394	70,308	63,798	134,106	138,418	97%
Rental	12,738	6,748	7,614	14,361	12,320	117%
Staff Development	24,046	11,476	12,035	23,511	32,082	73%
Travel Costs	20,714	7,250	16,251	23,500	19,700	119%
Utilities	39,787	23,512	18,415	41,927	43,145	97%
Vehicles and Field Equipment	122,946	57,011	58,836	115,847	122,845	94%
Program	701,228	576,563	314,920	891,482	693,436	129%
Board Of Director's	21,100	19,651	19,264	38,914	26,477	147%
Wages and Benefits	2,851,480	1,440,260	1,670,927	3,111,187	3,010,561	103%
<b>Total Operating Expense</b>	<b>4,481,174</b>	<b>2,472,451</b>	<b>2,487,221</b>	<b>4,959,672</b>	<b>4,701,996</b>	<b>105%</b>
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>137,429</b>	<b>1,247,038</b>	<b>(1,432,860)</b>	<b>(185,822)</b>	<b>(59,810)</b>	<b>311%</b>
<b>Other Expense (Income)</b>						
Capital	213,999	41,955	669,359	711,314	114,502	621%
Amortization	166,514	80,962	82,795	163,757	160,620	102%
Investment Income - Earned	(226,894)	(98,372)	(184,892)	(283,264)	0	0%
Investment Income - Unearned	(461,582)	(140,343)	(180,498)	(320,841)	0	0%
From Reserves - Revenue	(127,647)	(125,469)	(801,223)	(926,692)	(250,937)	369%
To Reserves - Expenses	48,932	38,315	35,515	73,829	76,624	96%
<b>Total Other Expense</b>	<b>(386,678)</b>	<b>(202,951)</b>	<b>(378,945)</b>	<b>(581,897)</b>	<b>100,809</b>	<b>-577%</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>524,107</b>	<b>1,449,990</b>	<b>(1,053,915)</b>	<b>396,075</b>	<b>(160,619)</b>	<b>-247%</b>



**Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority**  
 71108 Morrison Line, RR 3  
 Exeter, ON N0M 1S5

**Statement of Profit & Loss**  
 January through December  
 (Unaudited) Accrual Basis

Table 2: Drinking Water Source Protection

	2024	2025				
	Actual	Six Months January to June	Six Months July to December	TOTAL		
	Twelve Months			Twelve months	Budget	% of Budget
<b>Revenue</b>						
Grant, Provincial/Federal	306,284	201,617	100,808	302,425	302,425	100%
Interest	2,183	1,870	2,128	3,998	1,000	400%
Deferred from Prior Year - Revenue	0	34,721	0	34,721	35,108	99%
Deferred to Future Year - Expense	(34,721)	0	(99,418)	(99,418)	(28,983)	343%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>273,746</b>	<b>238,208</b>	<b>3,518</b>	<b>241,726</b>	<b>309,550</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Expense</b>						
Purchased Services	25,849	15,356	12,884	28,240	28,200	100%
Advertising	835	0	0	0	800	0%
Memberships, Dues, Licenses	759	160	371	531	0	0%
Office Operations	19,284	10,593	8,750	19,343	21,020	92%
Rental	7,227	3,820	3,703	7,522	7,140	105%
Staff Development	134	96	0	96	1,350	7%
Travel Costs	2,296	149	1,411	1,560	3,000	52%
Utilities	1,380	690	750	1,440	1,600	90%
Vehicles and Field Equipment	174	726	129	855	500	171%
Program	2,329	0	41	41	300	14%
Board Of Director's	7,642	3,065	2,814	5,879	13,940	42%
Wages and Benefits	205,837	90,472	85,748	176,220	231,700	76%
<b>Total Operating Expense</b>	<b>273,746</b>	<b>125,126</b>	<b>116,600</b>	<b>241,726</b>	<b>309,550</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>113,082</b>	<b>(113,082)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
Other Expense (Income)						
From Reserves - Revenue	0	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>Total Other Expense</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>113,082</b>	<b>(113,082)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>





## Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority

71108 Morrison Line, RR 3

Exeter, ON N0M 1S5

### Statement of Profit & Loss

January through December

(Unaudited)

Accrual Basis

Table 3: ABCA Excluding DWSP

	2024	2025				
	Actual Twelve Months	Six Months January to June	Six Months July to December	TOTAL		
				Twelve months	Budget	% of Budget
<b>Revenue</b>						
Grants and Contributions	1,673,114	841,783	781,706	1,623,489	1,050,172	155%
Operating Levy - Category 1	1,076,874	564,289	564,290	1,128,579	1,128,580	100%
Operating Levy - Category 1 Projects	199,773	88,014	88,013	176,027	176,025	100%
Operating Levy - Category 3	163,976	86,309	86,308	172,617	172,616	100%
Levy, Capital	0	10,024	10,021	20,045	20,045	0%
Levy, Special Benefit	91,053	0	93,959	93,959	93,961	100%
Rental	69,062	41,549	32,281	73,830	60,587	122%
Conservation Area User Fees	176,487	47,102	142,435	189,536	142,600	133%
Sales & Service	855,783	527,250	454,267	981,517	832,080	118%
Donations	2,588	12,643	4,231	16,874	1,000	1687%
Interest	70,528	28,906	22,460	51,366	78,000	66%
Sundry	564	0	75	75	0	0%
Deferred from Prior Year - Revenue	1,198,470	1,233,413	0	1,233,413	1,053,777	117%
Deferred to Future Year - Expense	(1,233,413)	0	(1,229,204)	(1,229,204)	(476,807)	258%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>4,344,858</b>	<b>3,481,281</b>	<b>1,050,842</b>	<b>4,532,123</b>	<b>4,332,636</b>	<b>105%</b>
<b>Expense</b>						
Purchased Services	375,896	151,765	220,983	372,748	422,625	88%
Advertising	9,257	3,790	2,566	6,356	7,483	85%
Bad Debts	2	0	10	10	0	0%
Memberships, Dues, Licenses	58,688	39,225	27,113	66,338	63,509	104%
Maintenance and Repair	31,565	24,211	14,504	38,715	25,395	152%
Property Taxes	51,891	25,167	26,730	51,897	55,000	94%
Office Operations	113,110	59,715	55,048	114,763	117,398	98%
Rental	5,511	2,928	3,911	6,839	5,180	132%
Staff Development	23,912	11,380	12,035	23,415	30,732	76%
Travel Costs	18,417	7,101	14,840	21,940	16,700	131%
Utilities	38,407	22,822	17,665	40,487	41,545	97%
Vehicles and Field Equipment	122,772	56,285	58,708	114,993	122,345	94%
Program	698,899	576,563	314,879	891,442	693,136	129%
Board Of Director's	13,458	16,586	16,450	33,036	12,537	264%
Wages and Benefits	2,645,644	1,349,788	1,585,180	2,934,968	2,778,861	106%
<b>Total Operating Expense</b>	<b>4,207,428</b>	<b>2,347,325</b>	<b>2,370,621</b>	<b>4,717,946</b>	<b>4,392,446</b>	<b>107%</b>
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>137,429</b>	<b>1,133,956</b>	<b>(1,319,779)</b>	<b>(185,822)</b>	<b>(59,810)</b>	<b>311%</b>
<b>Other Expense (Income)</b>						
Capital	213,999	41,955	669,359	711,314	114,502	621%
Amortization	166,514	80,962	82,795	163,757	160,620	102%
Investment Income - Earned	(226,894)	(98,372)	(184,892)	(283,264)	0	0%
Investment Income - Unearned	(461,582)	(140,343)	(180,498)	(320,841)	0	0%
From Reserves - Revenue	(127,647)	(125,469)	(801,223)	(926,692)	(250,937)	369%
To Reserves - Expenses	48,932	38,315	35,515	73,829	76,624	96%
<b>Total Other Expense</b>	<b>(386,678)</b>	<b>(202,951)</b>	<b>(378,945)</b>	<b>(581,897)</b>	<b>100,809</b>	<b>-577%</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>524,107</b>	<b>1,336,908</b>	<b>(940,833)</b>	<b>396,075</b>	<b>(160,619)</b>	<b>-247%</b>

# ABCA Program Report

**To:** Board of Directors  
**Date:** February 19, 2026  
**From:** Mike Bax, RGCA Superintendent  
**Subject:** RGCA 2025 Summary  
**Report Type:** INFORMATION REPORT

---

## Recommendation:

THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors receives the report RGCA 2025 Summary for information as presented.

## Background:

This report provides an overview of the 2025 season at Rock Glen Conservation Area (RGCA).

RGCA has two staff members present from May to October and a summer student during July and August. Staff are responsible for operating the gate house, collecting entry fees, and answering visitors' questions; as well as maintaining the area to ensure a safe, and enjoyable experience. Staff were successful with an application to the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program in 2025, which contributed funding towards the summer student position.

RGCA provides a space for visitors, from near and far, to have a chance to enjoy the beauty of the outdoors, in the Ausable River watershed. People enjoy the waterfalls, fossils, visiting the museum, walking trails, having family picnics and weddings, RGCA has many activities which draw people to the Arkona area.

## Attendance 2025

The following table outlines the number of visitors to RGCA, during the period of the year which RGCA is staffed.

	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Total
Day Entry	3,610	6375	11,482	13314	4806	4647	44,234
Pass Entry	86	139	156	194	125	166	866

RGCA maintains a higher average annual attendance rate than pre-pandemic rates. Excluding 2020 and 2021, which realized drastic increases in attendance, attendance at RGCA in 2025 is approximately 134% of its average (2018 until 2025). It is also important to note that the option for visitors to pay via e-transfer was introduced in spring 2024. In 2025, 484 e-transfers accounted for a total of 1287 day-use entries. Staff expect the option for visitors to pay via e-transfer



will continue to help RGCA realize off-season revenue, as payment was previously limited to cash only during this time.

The following table outlines the number of passes, and pavilion rentals realized in 2025, and how it compares to the previous year.

	Number Sold - 2025	Percentage Relative to 2024
Family Passes	52	84%
Individual Passes	6	55%
Pavilion Rental	28	104%

The following are interesting stats that are tracked with the guest book, located in the Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre:

- Guest book entries – 2563
- Guest book unique countries – 52
- Canadian and USA visitors came from 11 provinces and 21 states

### **Education at RGCA**

RGCA staff work closely with ABCA's Conservation Education department. RGCA provides an excellent venue for all ages to learn about nature, animals, trees, the watershed, and local history. In 2025, along with education staff, RGCA hosted nearly 30 education programs. These programs were primarily for school groups, guiding groups, and seniors' outings. The Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre that is located at RGCA, attracts visitors to RGCA, and provides a passive education experience to visitors.

### **2026 Priorities**

RGCA continues to provide valuable experience to conservation area visitors, and as a location to facilitate education programs. The 2025 season saw an increase in attendance numbers compared to the 2024 season; however, it is a level of use that staff feel is sustainable. The following are priorities for 2026:

- Increase the number of passes sold
- Work with the education department to provide safe and exciting programs and visits
- Continue to enhance off-season and "shoulder" season opportunities offered at RGCA
- Work with the Arkona Lions and Lambton County to utilize the Creative County Grant with the goal of improving the Museum and Visitors Centre

# *ABCA Program Report*

**To:** Board of Directors  
**Date:** February 19, 2026  
**From:** Nathan Schoelier  
**Subject:** Rock Glen Conservation Area Master Plan (2025 – 2035)  
**Report Type:** ACTION REQUIRED

---

## **Recommendation:**

THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the Rock Glen Conservation Area Master Plan (2025 – 2035).

## **Background:**

Appended to this report is the final draft of the *Rock Glen Conservation Area Master Plan (2025 – 2035)*.

Staff utilized past master plans, institutional knowledge, and public feedback; guided by the Conservation Lands Strategy (2024) to prepare a Master Plan that guides the management of Rock Glen Conservation Area (RGCA).

Upon Board of Directors approval, the Master Plan will be made available on Ausable Bayfield Conservation's website, on the *Conservation Lands Strategies and Plans* page ([www.abca.ca/recreation/land-strategies/](http://www.abca.ca/recreation/land-strategies/)).





AUSABLE BAYFIELD  
CONSERVATION

CREATING AWARENESS | TAKING ACTION

# Rock Glen Conservation Area Master Plan (2025 - 2035)

Approved by Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors:

TBC



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## Preface

The Rock Glen Conservation Area (RGCA) Master Plan is the guiding document for the management of this conservation area which is owned and managed by the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA). The recommendations in this master plan are intended to help direct property management that considers the needs of the environment, and the needs of the community.

This master plan was developed using the goals, objectives, and considerations described in ABCA's Conservation Lands Strategy (CLS), approved November 21, 2024. This master plan includes the collective input from stakeholders and the community.

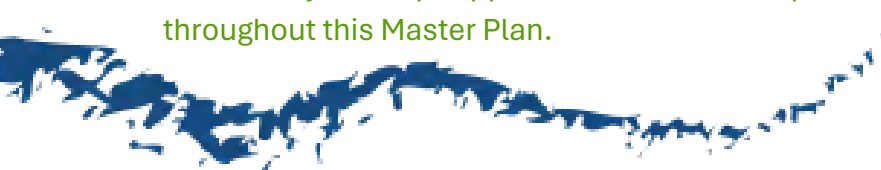
This master plan was approved by ABCA's Board of Directors on \_\_\_\_ (approval date to be included in final approved plan) \_\_\_\_.



## Acknowledgements

The Rock Glen Conservation Area Master Plan (2025 - 2035) is the product of collective input from ABCA staff, local residents, visitors, partners, and stakeholders. This collaboration shaped a guiding document that will support effective, balanced management at RGCA.

ABCA extends a special acknowledgement to those who participated in engagement sessions, completed the public survey, and submitted written comments. We recognize the community's deep appreciation for this special place, and your feedback is reflected throughout this Master Plan.





## Land Acknowledgement

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority acknowledges the original stewards of this land, the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe. We recognize the Huron Tract Treaty signed in 1827. We recognize this territory was subject to the Dish with One Spoon wampum, under which multiple nations agreed to care for the land and resources, including plants and animals, in peace. As shared stewards of this land and water, ABCA is grateful to work in this territory.





## Executive Summary

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) has updated the Rock Glen Conservation Authority (RGCA) Master Plan, building on ~~past the original (1979) and revised (1988 and 2004)~~ plans, ~~dating back to 1970~~. This update reflects current usage and management challenges, offering a progressive framework that balances conservation goals with sustainable operations. The plan was guided by the Conservation Lands Strategy (2024).

Located at 8680 Rock Glen Road in Arkona, Municipality of Lambton Shores, RGCA is a 26-hectare conservation area formed through the acquisition of three parcels between 1954 and 1969. Originally established to protect the Ausable Gorge and support compatible recreation, its core goals – protection, preservation, and public access – remain unchanged, despite evolving challenges and opportunities. The Ausable River borders the property to the east, while the Hobbs – McKenzie Drain runs through the property, featuring the Rock Glen Falls, an 11-metre waterfall and RGCA's most popular attraction. RGCA also contains an abundance of fossils, providing a key attraction for visitors.

It is an ecologically significant site within the Ausable Gorge, part of the Ausable River watershed and the biodiverse Carolinian zone. The Carolinian zone supports a high level of biodiversity, including species at risk (SAR) and species that are not found anywhere else in Canada.

RGCA is primarily used for passive, nature-based recreation such as hiking, birdwatching, and picnicking. It also hosts events like family reunions, weddings, and community gatherings. Visitation continues to grow, with approximately 38,000 annual visits at the time of this update. A key attraction is the Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre, developed in partnership with the Arkona Lions Club, which welcomes thousands of the visitors each year.

The original, and 1988 master plans focus on the environmental degradation caused by intensive, uncontrolled use and a two-part strategy to balance environmental and community needs. The two-part strategy included adding recreational amenities to the more resilient tablelands to reduce pressure on sensitive valley lands and creating a defined trail system to guide access. This approach successfully supported a balance between conserving natural areas and recreation by addressing the insufficient availability of sustainable recreational features relative to the public use and demand of the property. This updated plan builds on past challenges and successes, with recommendations that reinforce this strategy.

ABCA works to adapt to the needs of the environment, and the needs of the community, using the best available information at the time; therefore, the master plan will be updated every ten years.



## Master Plan Process

This Master Plan was updated according to the process approved by the ABCA Board of Directors at its March 20, 2025 meeting. The process is as follows:

1. Staff consulted the Conservation Lands Strategy to develop a draft master plan.
2. The draft Master Plan was presented to ABCA's Board of Directors on September 18, 2025. The plan, and stakeholder engagement list were approved by the Board of Directors.
3. Staff engaged with the stakeholders identified at the September 18, 2025 meeting, and facilitated a public feedback survey concurrently.
4. Staff considered the feedback and incorporated it into the final draft of the Master Plan. The Master Plan was approved by the Board of Directors at its \_\_\_\_ (TBC) \_\_\_\_ meeting.

## What We Heard - Engagement Summary

The ABCA engaged key stakeholders to provide input into the development of this Master Plan to help guide management efforts at RGCA. The ABCA engaged with the following stakeholders:

- Arkona Lions Club
- County of Lambton
- Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nations
- Municipality of Lambton Shores
- Township of Warwick
- Residents of the Town of Arkona and surrounding area
- RGCA season pass holders

The ABCA also facilitated opportunities for public input through an online survey, made available from October 1, 2025 until November 5, 2025. The online survey included recommendations that relate to the public, and did not include recommendations specific to one partner.

This Master Plan integrates the collective feedback gathered through engagement efforts, strengthening the plan and guiding management of RGCA. The table on the following page describes the public feedback that ABCA received regarding the recommendations described in this Master Plan. The final recommendations may be found on Pages 19 - 22, in the 'Implementation' section of this Master Plan.





Recommendation	Feedback	Amendment to Final Plan
1.2	75% of respondents agree	None required.
1.4	-	New rec. following engagement.
2.1	80%+ of respondents agree	None required.
2.2	60%+ of respondents agree	None required.
2.3	Approx. 40% of respondents agree; 40% are neutral or 'Don't Know', and the remaining respondents disagree.	None required.
3.1	50% of respondents agree; 32% are neutral or 'Don't Know.'	Clarification added to include restoration and education opportunities.
3.2	75% of respondents agree	None required.
3.3	80% of respondents agree	None required.
4.1	60%+ respondents agree; a significant number were neutral or 'Don't Know'	Due to the number of respondents were neutral or identified 'Don't Know,' ABCA amended the rec. to include further consultation. The proportion of respondents answering 'Don't Know' indicates that proceeding without additional engagement could result in public concern or opposition.

# Conservation Lands Strategy

The development of this master plan was directed by the goals, objectives, and management considerations detailed in the CLS (2024) and reinforced by the Watershed Based Resource Management Strategy (2024). Some conservation areas may have CLS goals and objectives that are not, or are less applicable to the property, and its management; however, due to the dynamic and multifaceted nature of RGCA, all CLS goals and objectives are applicable. The public recognizes RGCA primarily for its nature-based public use opportunities, highlighting the importance of other CLS goals, such as balancing recreational use, with responsible conservation-based management.

## Management Goal

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority and its partners are dedicated to conserving the ecological integrity of Rock Glen Conservation Area, while offering compatible recreational and educational opportunities that encourage nature appreciation and help fund the sustainable management of conservation lands.

## Background

### Land Acquisition and Disposition

RGCA, as it exists today, was formed through the acquisition of three separate parcels of land. In 1954, the Ausable River Conservation Authority purchased a 4.1-hectare parcel from the Arkona Lions Club, which had managed the site as a park from 1948 to 1954. In 1958, and 1969, the adjacent parcels were purchased to enlarge the conservation area to its current size, 26 hectares. The area was established to help preserve and protect the Ausable Gorge, while offering recreational opportunities compatible with its natural environment. Since then, its development and management have followed this vision, making RGCA a successful nature-based destination for thousands of visitors.

No property disposition has occurred at RGCA.

### Connections with Other Publicly Accessible Lands

RGCA is not connected to any other publicly accessible lands. The Rock Glen Family Resort, a private campground with recreation facilities, is directly across the road from RGCA.



# Background

## Land Use History

While RGCA is located in an area with a rich cultural heritage, spanning much longer than described in this master plan, this section focuses on the period documented by ABCA through aerial imagery and past master plans, beginning in 1947.

Before ABCA's ownership, the land that now forms RGCA was primarily used for agriculture. A 1947 aerial image (Figure 1) shows sparse tree cover, suggesting that the property was used for pasturing livestock, and growing row crops or forage in the small fields. Areas with difficult access due to watercourses and steep slopes appear less disturbed. In 1948, the Arkona Lions Club began managing a 10-acre parcel of the property as a park, which the Ausable River Conservation Authority purchased in 1954.



*Figure 1: 1947 aerial image of Rock Glen Conservation Area. The red polygon denotes the approximate property boundary in 2025.*

Figure 2 shows the property and surrounding area in 1972, shortly after ABCA acquired the final parcel in 1969. Figure 2 suggests that the most intensive agricultural use occurred just before ABCA's ownership of the complete area. The 1972 aerial image (Figure 2) highlights the transition in agricultural practices that likely occurred at the property. More land was cleared for fields to support row crops, and it appears that the forest matured where it was not cleared, suggesting that livestock were no longer present to inhibit regeneration.

By 1979, several elements of the conservation area were already in place, as outlined in the original 1979 master plan. The property included a picnic area, pavilion, and sports area, all located north of the gorge. A gatehouse, and parking lot were located at the entrance, and the two areas were connected by three bridges that were all located above the falls, one of the bridges supported vehicular access. The washroom was also nearing completion when the plan was developed in August 1979.



*Figure 2: 1972 aerial image of Rock Glen Conservation Area. The red polygon denotes the approximate property boundary in 2025.*

In the 1970s and 1980s, staff recognized that intensive, uncontrolled use of the gorge was degrading its condition, as evidence by a maze of random, intersecting trails. A two-part strategy was implemented: developing recreation within the more resilient tablelands, and creating a defined trail system to minimize ecological impact. The 1988 Master Plan built upon the original plan, emphasizing sustainable recreation through responsible development of the site. Early improvements to the tablelands are visible in the 1989 aerial image (Figure 3). To guide access, stairs to the Ausable Gorge were also constructed during this time. The Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre was constructed in 1986.





*Figure 3: 1989 aerial image of Rock Glen Conservation Area. The red polygon denotes the approximate property boundary in 2025.*

By the late 1990's, development at RGCA was substantially complete. The 1999 aerial image (Figure 4) shows a layout similar how RGCA is at the time of this update. According to the 1988 Master Plan, deciduous and coniferous plantations – planted between 1974 and 1976 using species such as soft maple, white ash, white pine, and spruce – had reached heights of 2 to 5 metres in height by 1988. Some plantations are visible in the 1999 image, though the sparse conifers in the northwest suggest low survival rates. A single row of each, white pine, cedar, and spruce, was also planted along the northern boundary.



*Figure 4: 1999 aerial image of Rock Glen Conservation Area. The red polygon denotes the approximate property boundary in 2025.*

The 2004 Master Plan proposed converting a low-quality ash plantation into a more suitable ecosystem, such as tall grass prairie or old-field transition. Soon after, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) killed the ash trees at RGCA, prompting significant staff resources to remove hazardous trees. In 2014, ABCA and community groups planted native species, including sugar maple, silver maple, tulip tree, sycamore, Kentucky coffee tree, red oak, chinquapin oak, Ohio buckeye, and redbud, to reforest the area. Some areas, particularly in the northwest have naturally transitioned to old-field conditions, this is visible in Figure 5.

To promote safe areas for children to play, and build upon the early strategy established for RGCA, two playgrounds were established in 2008. These playground structures are located in the tablelands of RGCA.



*Figure 5: 2020 aerial image of Rock Glen Conservation Area. The red polygon denotes the approximate property boundary in 2025.*

In response to high visitor numbers in 2020, staff implemented several upgrades to increase capacity while protecting RGCA's ecological integrity. The lower parking lot, west of the Hobbs-McKenzie Drain crossing was expanded to accommodate an additional 24 vehicles. Additional parking spaces were also added to the upper loop, to support increased use of the pavilion. To reduce pressure on heavily used amenities, a new trail was established in 2023. It encourages visitor dispersion and offers an alternative route through the Ausable River Valley, linking the lower drain crossing to the tablelands near the north pavilion.



# Background

## Staffing

RGCA has a dedicated on-site team consisting of a Superintendent, and two Conservation Area Assistants who staff the property from May through October. Additional staff from ABCA's Administration Centre provide support as needed.

The Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre is managed by volunteers from the Arkona Lions Club, with assistance from ABCA staff.

## Permitted Activities



Bird Watching



Geocaching



Snowshoeing



Hiking



Picnicking



Fishing\*



Walking dogs on leash

*\*Fishing is only permitted in the Ausable River. Fishing is not permitted in the Hobb-McKenzie Drain due to the high volume of visitors in this area.*



# Background

## Programs and Services

RGCA is a key part of ABCA's conservation lands, and passive recreation programs. It supports the organization's broader mandate by contributing to several core programs and services, including:

- Conservation Education Program
  - RGCA is a primary site for hands-on, nature-based learning that fosters environmental awareness and appreciation.
- Flood Forecasting and Warning Program
  - RGCA is a site where snow depth and water equivalent measurements are collected, contributing critical data for assessing flood risk throughout the watershed.
- Biomonitoring
  - RGCA offers access to the Ausable River for long-term monitoring of fish and mussel species. It hosts a long-term index station for both fish and mussels
- Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network
  - RGCA hosts a monitoring well as part of Ontario's Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network (PGMN), a partnership between the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) and Conservation Authorities. Water quality at the RGCA is assessed annually, while groundwater levels are recorded hourly to track hydrological trends.

Beyond these defined programs, RGCA plays a vital role in integrated watershed management. Natural areas support essential ecological and hydrological functions, which support the core mandate of conservation authorities: protecting people and property from flooding and other natural hazards.

## Infrastructure

RGCA contains a significant amount of infrastructure relative to ABCA's other conservation areas. This includes, but is not limited to: an entry gatehouse, mid-level watercourse crossings, museum and information centre, and a fully serviced washroom. The infrastructure at RGCA is a valuable asset to its operations, supporting visitor satisfaction and, ultimately, the viability of its operations.

Unless specifically addressed in the recommendations of this Master Plan, existing infrastructure is considered an asset to both the conservation area and the organization. Its maintenance, rehabilitation or replacement will be guided ABCA's Capital Asset Management Plan (2024) and will be integrated into financial forecasts and annual budget preparations to ensure existing infrastructure remains safe and continues to support a high level of visitor satisfaction.





# Background

## Visitor and Community Use

### Visitor Numbers

The numbers described in this section include gate entries from day-use visitors, event and program attendees, and visits from season pass holders.

The number of people visiting RGCA has increased steadily over the past decade (Figure 6), increasing from approximately 10,000 visitors in 2014, to approximately 41,000 visitors in 2024. The pandemic was an exception to the otherwise, linear growth realized at RGCA. The pandemic generated exceptionally busy times for conservation areas across the province; during this time, RGCA realized an annual attendance as high as 71,461 people. Since that time, the visitor numbers have returned to a pattern, consistent with the linear growth that was occurring prior to the exceptional years of 2020, and 2021. During the post-pandemic period of 2022 – 2024, RGCA has averaged approximately 38,000 people per year, but the growth from 2014 – 2024 suggests that this may continue to increase steadily.

Approximately 20% of the total number of annual visitors is realized during statutory holiday long weekends. Canada Day, Civic Holiday, and Labour Day weekends receive the highest number of visitors, often having more than 2000 visitors over the course of three days during each of these weekends.

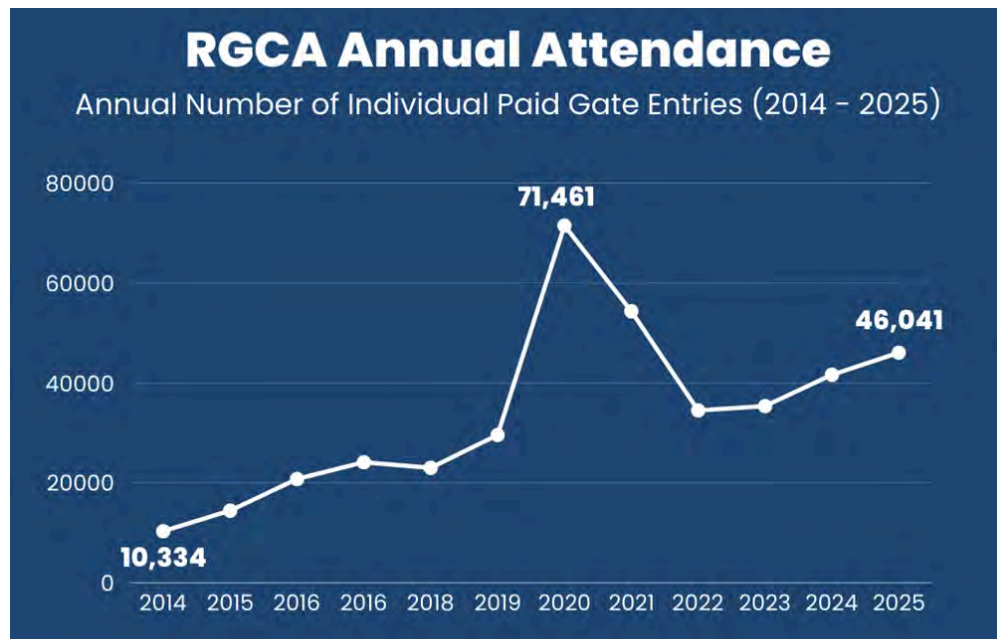


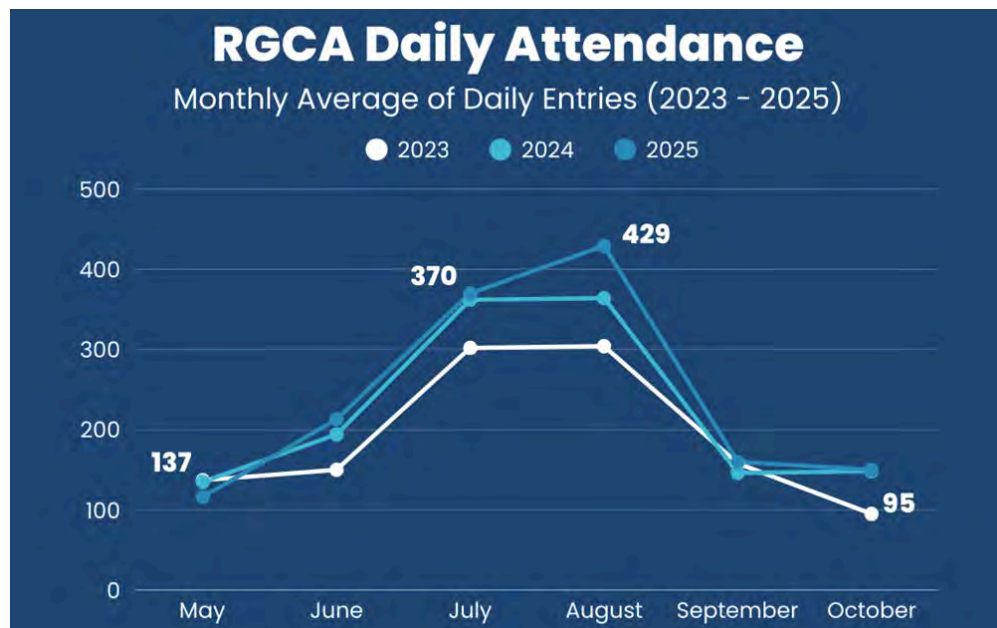
Figure 6: Annual attendance at Rock Glen Conservation Area from 2014 to 2025. This graph denotes the number of paid gate entries; entries permitted by an Annual Pass or select events are in addition to these numbers.

# Background

## Visitor and Community Use

### Visitor Numbers

Figure 7 demonstrates how visitor numbers are distributed across the season when RGCA has staff present. Understanding how visitor numbers are distributed across the year helps guide management decisions that conserve the ecological integrity of RGCA, while ensuring sustainable growth and outdoor opportunities.



*Figure 7: Monthly average of daily paid entries during the period that Rock Glen Conservation Area has staff present daily.*

### Season Pass Holder Numbers

RGCA offers two options for season passes, including a season pass for an individual person, as well as a season pass for a family. The season pass program is an appreciated, and growing program. In 2024, 62 family passes, and 11 individual season passes were purchased.

### Events

RGCA hosts a variety of events each season, including community partner events (e.g., Bruce Redman Car Show hosted by the Arkona Lions Club) and private functions (e.g., weddings, reunions, and corporate gatherings). Event fees, set annually, help cover staff time and contribute to funding conservation area operations. Fee waiver requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, considering community benefit, ABCA resource requirements, and potential impacts to RGCA operations. All waivers require approval by the ABCA Board of Directors.

# Background

## Cultural and Heritage Resources

While RGCA is situated in an area with a rich cultural heritage that extends beyond what is described in this plan, this section includes only the information documented in previous plans. RGCA provides a unique cross-section of ancient history as well as examples of the more recent cultural history of the immediate area.

When the area was covered by the Devonian Sea, deposits containing simple life forms were left behind. Erosion by the Ausable River and Hobbs – McKenzie Drain has since exposed these layers, exposing these fossils. The abundance, and ability to view these fossils have made RGCA well known.

Cultural history, including early agricultural practices is also evident on the property. The foundation from a grist mill may be viewed immediately below the falls; three different mills have been constructed on the site since 1837. Only the foundation of the last mill, built in 1870 remains. The ruins of the McGibbon homestead, once home to the last mill owner, are located near the pavilion in the lower picnic area.

Nearby in the Ausable River, remnants of a hydroelectric dam that was removed in 1937, reflect early power development in Arkona. The original dam was constructed in 1907, only to be destroyed by flooding in 1908. The dam was blown out in 1937, following pressure from upstream anglers who demanded a fish ladder, or an end to the dam, to allow for natural movement of fish.

Though only remnants of these structures remain, a considerable amount of history is known and recorded in publications about the history of Arkona.

## Natural Areas

### Watershed Context

RGCA is located within the Ausable River watershed, in an area of the watershed known as the Ausable Gorge. For much of its course, the Ausable River runs alongside the Wyoming Moraine, with RGCA situated near the point where the river cuts through the moraine as it continues toward its outlet at Lake Huron.

While the broader watershed is dominated by agricultural land use, RGCA and the surrounding Ausable Gorge support diverse forest habitats.



# Background

## Site Characteristics

The property includes several ecosystem types, ranging from restored areas transitioning from former land use to natural conditions, to relatively undisturbed natural areas.

The riparian and valley lands of the Ausable River, which forms the property's eastern boundary, are dominated by natural forest habitat, including Carolinian species. This ecosystem extends into the Hobbs-Mckenzie Drain watershed upstream to Rock Glen Falls. The forest shows minimal signs of disturbance from invasive species or past land use practices, likely due to steep valley terrain limiting access.

Outside of the valley lands, the landscape features flat to rolling terrain sloping toward the Ausable River and Hobbs-Mckenzie Drain. Several intermittent watercourses cross these areas, some with steep terrain similar to the valley slopes. The flattest areas show the most disturbance and are either used for access and recreation or have been reforested to support natural regeneration.

## Environmental Designations and Protections

Environmental designations and protections are an important component of conserving the ecological integrity of RGCA. This master plan may not present a comprehensive inventory of environmental designations and protections.

### *Area of Natural and Scientific Interest*

Approximately 80% of RGCA is provincially designated as being part of the Ausable River Valley Life Science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI). ANSIs are areas of land and water containing unique natural landscapes or features. There are two types of ANSIs, Earth Science, and Life Science. Life Science ANSIs represent significant biodiversity and natural landscapes.

### *Conservation Authorities Act*

Areas of RGCA are subject to Ontario Regulation 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits under the Conservation Authorities Act. Ontario Regulation 41/24 directs development away from natural hazards, supporting the core mandate of conservation authorities of managing watershed resources and protecting life and property.

### *Municipal Zoning By-Law*

The Municipality of Lambton Shores Municipal Zoning By-Law establishes and regulates land use by implementing the general policies from the Municipality of Lambton Shores Official Plan. The zoning regulations applicable to RGCA are Open Space – 1 (OS1), Environmental Protection – Hazard (EP-H), and Environmental Protection – Woodlot (EP – WD).

# Background

## Environmental Designations and Protections

### *Woodlands Conservation By-Law*

The forested areas of RGCA are subject to regulation under the County of Lambton's Woodlands Conservation By-Law. The Woodlands Conservation By-Law aims to promote good forestry practices, and conserve forest habitat, and forest resources for future generations.

## Natural Heritage Augmentation

The ecosystem benefits provided by the natural areas at RGCA extend beyond property boundaries by contributing to overall ecosystem health.

The natural areas at RGCA build upon the forests and other ecosystems that line the Ausable River. From approximately Sylvan Road, through RGCA, and downstream to just north of Elginfield Road, the Ausable River valley is one of the most intact natural areas in the entire Ausable River watershed. This forms a natural connection that supports movement and migration of floral and fauna species.

The watershed model recognizes the direct link between land management and aquatic health. The natural areas at RGCA, along with those throughout the broader valley, play a positive role in supporting healthy aquatic ecosystems. This contribution is both in the aquatic ecosystems adjacent to the terrestrial ecosystems, as well as throughout the larger, downstream areas of the Ausable River.

## Species at Risk

Ontario's Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC) provides species at risk (SAR) data using one-kilometre grids, two of which apply to RGCA. Several SAR have been documented within this area.

It is essential that staff are aware of these species, or their potential presence, and manage the site accordingly. Staff maintain detailed records and monitor for new occurrences. Responsible management not only supports terrestrial species, but also protects and enhances conditions for nearby and downstream aquatic species.

To help safeguard SAR from potential threats, detailed information is not published in this plan.



## Summary of Prior Management Plan Implementation

Action Item - 2004	Status
Continue the partnership with the Arkona Lions Club.	<b>Implemented.</b> ABCA and the Arkona Lions Club maintain a strong partnership at RGCA.
Develop signs to educate visitors about the geological and cultural history of the park and species at risk.	<b>Implemented.</b>
Continue current management techniques which focus on visitor use in non-sensitive parts of the park in order to protect the geological features, Carolinian species and species at risk.	<b>Implemented/ Ongoing.</b> Conserving the ecological integrity of RGCA while providing compatible recreational and educational opportunities continues to be the top management priority.
Update the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems inventory.	<b>Implemented/ Ongoing.</b> Aquatic and terrestrial inventories have been completed since the last plan. It is important to inventory and update this information periodically; therefore, it is considered an ongoing action item.
Convert the low-quality ash plantation to a more appropriate ecosystem such as tallgrass prairie or old-field transition.	<b>Implemented.</b> The primary ash plantations have succeeded to old-field habitat. A smaller, centrally located, ash plantation was replaced with deciduous trees after it was impacted by the EAB.
Encourage good land use upstream of the park to improve water quality for recreation and aquatic species.	<b>Ongoing.</b> ABCA's Stewardship and Healthy Watersheds departments continue to promote best management practices (BMPs), and facilitate technical and financial support to landowners to implement BMPs.
Encourage research and scientific study.	<b>Ongoing.</b> ABCA permits research and scientific study through a Special Use Permit system. Researchers provide their findings to ABCA, augmenting institutional knowledge of the site.
Remove invasive, exotic tree species.	<b>Addressed in this Master Plan.</b>

## Management Statements

To support the Management Goal for RGCA, the ABCA provides the following management statements:

- To preserve and protect the unique natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations.
- To promote an appreciation and awareness of unique natural, cultural, historical and geomorphological features.
- To foster appreciation through experience by providing opportunities for low-impact, passive recreational activities, and educational programs.
- To foster and support partnerships that align with the management goal.

## Implementation

The following recommendations support implementation of the Master Plan in line with management goals, statements and the CLS (2024). The recommendations propose enhancements and operational changes at RGCA, with existing operations assumed to continue unless specifically addressed.

### Partnerships

**Recommendation 1.1:** Collaborate with the Arkona Lions Club and County of Lambton to develop a plan to enhance accessibility, self-guided interpretation, and security at the museum.

**Description:** The museum is an important asset to the conservation authority. Through collaboration, partners - including ABCA – can enhance the museum to support the long-term viability of its operations and improve the visitor experience. Collaboration also strengthens the partners' ability to secure external funding to support these efforts.

**Recommendation 1.2:** Work with local partners to explore ways to improve the pedestrian link between Arkona via Ann Street and Rock Glen Road.

**Description:** RGCA is an integral part of the Arkona community, with many residents visiting regularly and holding season passes. The Arkona Lions Club enhanced local access by installing a pedestrian bridge at the Community Centre Playground, linking the town with Rock Glen Road. With support from the Municipality and community partners, a defined pedestrian corridor could further strengthen this connection and promote active transportation. While ABCA recognizes this is a major project, it expresses interest in discussing its potential with the Municipality prior to future major maintenance of Rock Glen Road.



**Recommendation 1.3:** Work with the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nations to better incorporate traditional knowledge, as well as indigenous history, and modern uses of the land.

**Description:** ABCA acknowledges the original stewards of this land and is grateful to have the opportunity to meet and work in this territory. Through collaboration with the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nations, traditional knowledge can be integrated into management decisions. To further acknowledge the long-standing connection Indigenous people have to the land, Indigenous history, traditional ceremonies and modern land uses can be better reflected in cultural heritage resources and educational programming.

**Recommendation 1.4:** Collaborate with the County of Lambton’s Library and Cultural Services departments and programs to develop cross-promotion opportunities

**Description:** The County of Lambton has established programs and services, as well as a well-developed network of users. Collaborating on initiatives, including but not limited to, the Library of Things program, which provides rental opportunities beyond reading material – creates a unique local cross-promotion opportunity between the County’s network and RGCA’s network.

## Visitor Numbers, Activities, and Programming

**Recommendation 2.1:** Host recreation and education events that encourage people to visit during non-peak times.

**Description:** Unique and attractive recreational and educational events may be facilitated during the ‘shoulder-season’ months of May, June, September, and October, when attendance is historically lower than the peak-busy season. Strategically timed events may encourage a more consistent distribution of visitors throughout the season, supporting sustainable growth that mitigates potential ecological impacts, and enhances visitor satisfaction.

**Recommendation 2.2:** Implement a tiered-rate system to the season pass program which offers a pass at a lesser rate for those who utilize active transportation methods (e.g., walking or cycling).

**Description:** Available parking space is often a limiting factor for visitor capacity. Implementing this recommendation may help to encourage active transportation, provide an affordable option for those who live within walking, or cycling distance; and increase capacity at RGCA. ABCA recognizes the importance of consulting with the Municipality of Lambton Shores, to mitigate any unintended consequences, such as people parking on the roadside and walking into RGCA to receive a pass at a reduced rate. Further, ABCA will evaluate the most effective methods for promoting and delivering this program across Huron Shores Area Transit.



**Recommendation 2.3:** Host an annual appreciation event for RGCA season pass holders.

**Description:** The season pass program helps foster relations between staff and regular visitors. Often these pass holders help report unauthorized use, vandalism, and provide feedback and ideas to staff for improvement that may be made. An appreciation event both recognizes the commitment of season pass holders to RGCA, and encourages new season pass holders.

## Environmental

**Recommendation 3.1:** Remove all Norway maple trees from RGCA; continue to monitor and manage Norway maple regeneration.

**Description:** Norway maple is an invasive species that impacts biodiversity in forested areas. It is often planted as a shade tree in residential areas; however, some Norway maple trees were planted throughout RGCA in the past. Removing the mature Norway maple trees from RGCA will reduce the immediate seed source; however, ongoing monitoring and management will be required due to seeds from Norway maple trees on adjacent properties. **To mitigate public concern or opposition, ABCA should plant native tree species to offset the removal of the invasive Norway Maple trees, where Norway Maple is the dominant canopy cover. ABCA should consider opportunities to use the invasive species management as an outreach and education opportunity.**

**Recommendation 3.2:** Complete bi-annual invasive species monitoring by trained staff to ensure the ‘Early Detection and Rapid Response’ (EDRR) framework for managing invasive species is utilized.

**Description:** EDRR is recognized as the most effective, and cost-effective approach for managing invasive species. Staff who are trained to identify invasive species will monitor for their presence, and if invasive species are detected, management will be employed accordingly. Invasive species management may be prioritized at the direction of trained staff; species of greater concern for ecological health and risk management (e.g., Giant hogweed, invasive phragmites, oak wilt) will be prioritized.

**Recommendation 3.3:** Update terrestrial and aquatic species inventories.

**Description:** Terrestrial and aquatic species inventories should be updated periodically, as resources permit, to ensure that management decisions are based on up-to-date, and accurate species information.



## Infrastructure

**Recommendation 4.1:** ~~Consider~~ Review the long-term viability of the most southern staircase and trail, adjacent to Rock Glen Road. ~~an end-of-life asset.~~

**Description:** The staircase, and trail that are located between the Hobbs-McKenzie Drain and Rock Glen Road ~~will~~ may be considered an end-of-life asset ~~which would~~ ~~and will~~ be removed prior to their condition degrading to a level that is no longer safe for visitor use.

Prior to determining the staircase, and trail as an end-of-life asset, the ABCA should engage a qualified engineering firm to support the assessment of future maintenance needs, and to inform decisions regarding the repair, replacement or decommissioning of the structure.

ABCA's concerns regarding the structures long-term viability are based on its proximity ~~The infrastructure is located adjacent~~ to the watercourse and its steep bank, which are subject to ongoing erosion which may eventually compromise the integrity of the infrastructure and create a hazard for visitors. ~~The infrastructure will be maintained through regular maintenance efforts to prolong its suitability but should the erosion progress expeditiously or the overall condition of the infrastructure degrade to an unsafe condition, the infrastructure should be closed, and removed. The infrastructure may be removed entirely, or in phases (e.g., the lower section may be left up to the main landing to create a viewing platform), as it determined by its condition at the time.~~

~~The eventual closing of this infrastructure will limit access and trampling at the top-of-bank, allowing native vegetation to regenerate and increase the buffer between the table lands, and the watercourse, mitigating erosion. The trail established in 2023 provides an alternative route for continued enjoyment of the property. Although this may be a significant change to RGCA, it is one of the recommendations that achieves ABCA's commitment to balance the recreational enjoyment of the property, with its ecological integrity.~~

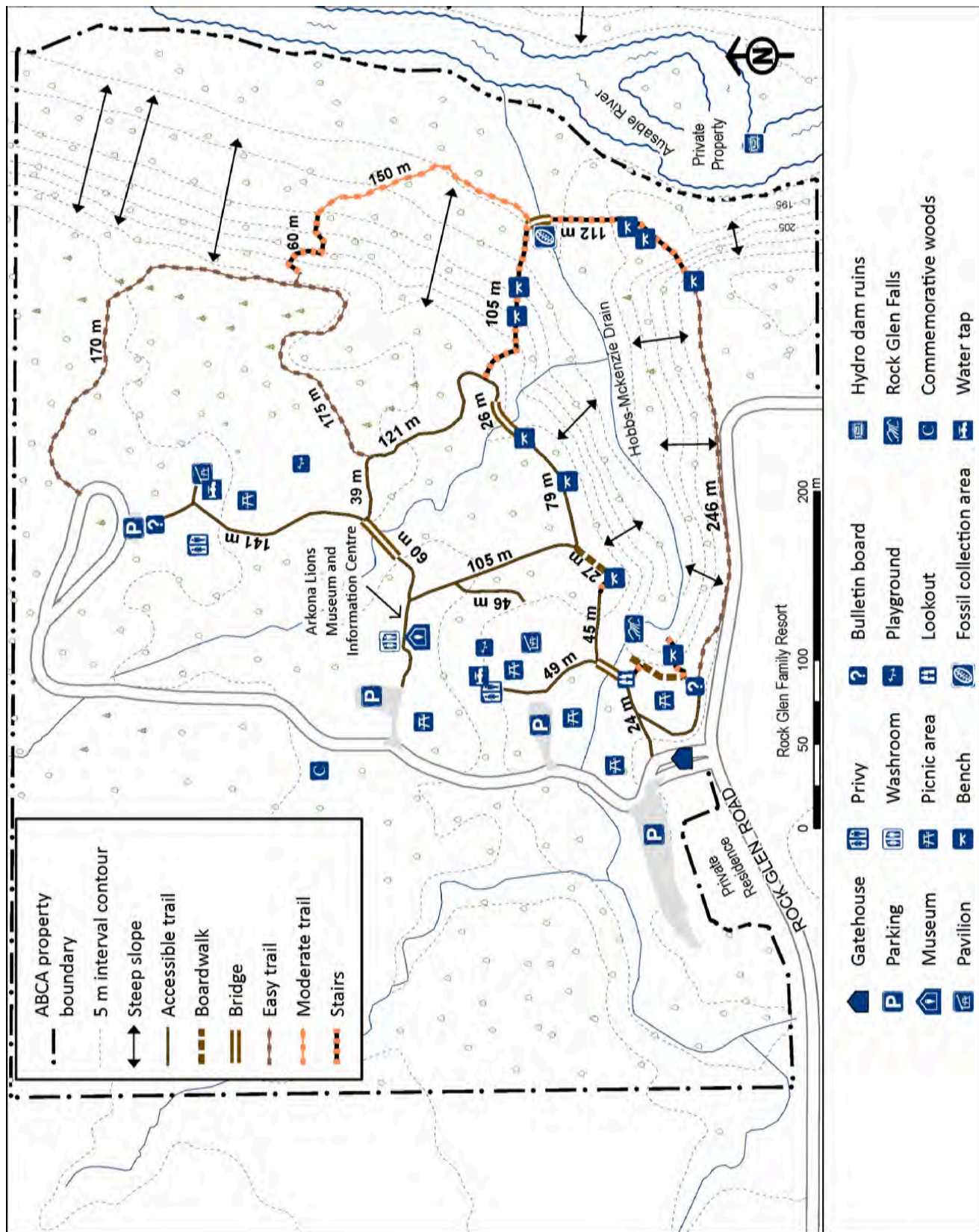
## Master Plan Review

To ensure this management plan remains current, a review and update will be conducted every ten years. If changes are required during the term of the plan, the Board of Directors may approve updates accordingly.

The Board of Directors will guide the public engagement process that is completed for the review of the plan based on the scope of the updates recommended by staff.



## Appendix: Site Map







# *ABCA Program Report*

**To:** Board of Directors  
**Date:** February 19, 2026  
**From:** Nathan Schoelier  
**Subject:** Draft Ausable River Cut Conservation Area Master Plan Update  
**Report Type:** ACTION REQUIRED

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## **Recommendation:**

THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the draft Master Plan update for Ausable River Cut Conservation Area to be made available for public and stakeholder feedback.

## **Background:**

The budget included funds for updating the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area (ARCA) Master Plan. The ARCA Master Plan was last updated in 2004; significant improvements have been completed since that time. Appended to this report is the first draft of the Master Plan update for ARCA. One of the primary goals that staff had for the update was to reintroduce institutional knowledge to the master plan. Reintroducing this information allows decisions to be made that consider historic information, alongside new tools and resources.

The update is being completed according to the process approved at the March 20, 2025, Board of Directors meeting. The next step is to make the plan available for public and stakeholder feedback. Staff have identified the following stakeholders:

- County of Lambton
- Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nations
- Lakeshore Eco Network
- Lambton Shores Nature Trails
- Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group
- Municipality of Lambton Shores
- Residents, groups and organizations in the surrounding area
- Rotary Club of Grand Bend

Staff will utilize various engagement methods and tools to complete meaningful engagement within the organization's capacity and resources. Upon completing engagement, any necessary changes will be reflected in the final draft of the plan, and it will return to the Board of Directors for approval.

## Preface

The Ausable River Cut Conservation Area (ARCA) Master Plan is the guiding document for the management of this conservation area which is owned and managed by the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA). The recommendations in this master plan are intended to help direct property management that considers the needs of the environment, and the needs of the community.

This master plan was developed using the goals, objectives, and considerations described in ABCA's Conservation Lands Strategy (CLS), approved November 21, 2024. This master plan includes the collective input (contributing partners to be listed in the final draft).

This master plan was approved by ABCA's Board of Directors on (approval date to be include in the final approved plan).

## Acknowledgements

*Placeholder: This section will be incorporated into the final draft of this Master Plan.*

## Land Acknowledgement

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority acknowledges the original stewards of this land, the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe. We recognize the Huron Tract Treaty signed in 1827. We recognize this territory was subject to the Dish with One Spoon wampum, under which multiple nations agreed to care for the land and resources, including plants and animals, in peace. As shared stewards of this land and water, ABCA is grateful to work in this territory.

## Executive Summary

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) has updated the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area (ARCA) Master Plan, building on the 2004 Master Plan. This update reflects current usage and management challenges, offering a progressive framework that balances conservation goals with sustainable operations. The plan was guided by the Conservation Lands Strategy (2024).

Located at 9984 Northville Crescent, near Port Franks, Municipality of Lambton Shores, ARCA is a 28-hectare (69-acre) conservation area formed through land acquisitions in 1949 and 1957. The initial land acquisitions at ARCA were associated with the Ausable River Conservation Authority's extension of the Canada Company Cut, in attempt to mitigate localized flooding by providing a new outlet for the Ausable River. The property was expanded in 1957, establishing a day-use conservation area.

The Ausable River borders the property to the north, Highway 21 borders the property to the east, and private residential properties border the south, and west boundaries of the property.

It is an ecologically significant site within the biodiverse Carolinian zone. The Carolinian zone supports a high level of biodiversity, including species at risk (SAR) and species that are not found



anywhere else in Canada. The property contains dune forests, present on rolling to steep sand dunes that are most prominent in the western half of the property.

ARCA is primarily used for passive, nature-based recreation such as hiking, birdwatching, and accessing the Ausable River for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. Although data describing the number of visitors is not available at the time of this update, staff and community partners have observed that the property is frequently used by both residents and tourists.

A strong partnership with Lambton Shores Nature Trails (LSNT) has been fundamental to enhancing the ecological, and recreation aspects of this property. LSNT is a local volunteer group who is dedicated to protecting natural areas, and providing opportunities for the community to experience, and learn about the environment.

The 2004 Master Plan includes several properties; however, due to significant differences in management approaches and the geographical separation caused by the Ausable River, this updated plan focuses solely on the area accessed at 9984 Northville Crescent. In 2004, the property was renamed Ausable River Cut Conservation Area (formerly Thedford Conservation Area).

The plan emphasizes strategies that balance public access with ecological integrity, promoting nature appreciation through experience. ABCA works to adapt to the needs of the environment, and the needs of the community, using the best available information at the time; therefore, the master plan will be updated every ten years.

## Master Plan Process

*Placeholder: This Master Plan is being updated according to the process approved by the ABCA Board of Directors at its March 20, 2025, meeting. In the final draft of this Master Plan, this section will describe how that process was applied to this specific plan update.*

## What We Heard – Engagement Summary

*Placeholder: This section will be incorporated into the final draft of this Master Plan.*

## Conservation Lands Strategy

The development of this master plan was directed by the goals, objectives, and management considerations detailed in the CLS (2024) and reinforced by the Watershed Based Resource Management Strategy (2024). While all CLS goals are connected to ARCA to some degree, the ecological sensitivity and its recreational use highlight the relevance of these particular goals. Although the site currently supports conservation education and community outreach initiatives, this master plan proposes enhancements that further position the property as a setting to “learn from nature, in nature,” in alignment with the CLS goal of fostering environmental appreciation within the watershed community through conservation education.

## Management Goal

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority and its partners are dedicated to protecting the ecological integrity of Ausable River Cut Conservation Area while offering compatible recreational and education opportunities that promote nature appreciation.

## Background

### Land Acquisition and Disposition

In 1947, the Ausable River Conservation Authority accepted an engineer's report that proposed a plan for 'improvement of the river mouth in the Port Franks area,' and identified the project as 'Scheme No. 1' of the Ausable River Conservation Authority. The project involved extending the Canada Company Cut to provide a new outlet for the Ausable River in attempt to mitigate localized flooding. In 1949, the conservation authority acquired a strip of land from Highway 21 to Lake Huron; this strip encompassed a portion of the lands that now comprise Ausable River Cut Conservation Area.

In 1957, additional lands were acquired, enlarging the ARCA. This acquisition supported the development of the area as a day-use conservation area.

No property disposition has occurred at ARCA.

### Connections with Other Publicly Accessible Lands

The Port Franks area is a unique region of the watershed, with several environmentally focused organizations that own and manage land with aligning and complementary goals. Partnerships with local community groups – such as the Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group and LSNT - have been fundamental in enhancing communication and collaboration amongst organizations and groups in the area. This improved collaboration has promoted public access to nature, resources and knowledge sharing, and a regional approach to environmental stewardship and managing challenges (e.g., invasive phragmites).

ARCA is part of a trail network, which connects the County of Lambton's Heritage Forest, Lambton Wildlife's Karner Blue Sanctuary and ARCA, for the public to enjoy a series of hiking trails. Although not directly connected, the property is situated near several other properties that provide public access to nature, including ABCA's L-Lake Management Area, Pinery Provincial Park and property owned by Nature Conservancy of Canada.

The property provides canoe and kayak access to the Ausable River, offering a rare opportunity for recreational use, as access to the river is otherwise limited along its entire length.

Although public access may be limited or unavailable, ARCA is also situated near several properties that have aligning conservation goals, including ABCA's Sherwood Fox Plant Preserve, Scouts Canada's Camp Attawandaron, and properties owned by Nature Conservancy of Canada.



*It is important to note that the access and permitted activities at the properties listed in this section may change. Individuals planning to visit any of these properties should consult official resources related to the specific property for the most up-to-date information.*

### Land Use History

While ARCA is in an area with a rich cultural heritage, spanning much longer than described in this master plan, this section focuses on the period documented by ABCA through aerial imagery and past master plans, beginning in 1947.

The areas surrounding the property have undergone significant landscape-level changes over the past eighty years. In 1947, there was little to no surrounding development, and the highway followed a different route. The 1947 aerial image (Figure 1) depicts a natural landscape dominated by forest canopy that was, on average, sparser than what is observed today. The 1947 aerial image indicates that the property experienced minimal development or disturbance, aside from a small area that may have been mowed. At that time, the unvegetated dune stood out as a prominent feature.



*Figure 1 1947 aerial image of the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area and surrounding area*

While significant landscape-level changes upstream likely influenced the river and water quality, the transition of the immediate landscape from natural habitat to residential areas had a larger

influence on the property. Between 1947 and 1975, the surrounding areas underwent development, including roads, residences, campgrounds, and additional infrastructure to support a growing community. The highway was also constructed in its present location.

The growth of the surrounding community and improvements to transportation infrastructure introduced new pressures, particularly an increase in the number of people likely to visit the property. The 1975 aerial image (Figure 2) depicts development that occurred at the property to help facilitate public use. This development includes multiple entrances, a loop-style road, and a privy washroom. The aerial image shows a network of unauthorized trails throughout the property, creating a relatively large, disturbed footprint. It also appears that a towpath ran along the river, extending beyond the property and through private lands to connect the site with adjacent neighbourhoods.

During this timeframe the property supported additional programs and services of the organization:

- The property formerly hosted the original stream gauge station, supporting the larger network of gauges. The gauge was relocated to the Port Franks Marina in the 1980s; however, the structure used to house monitoring equipment is still present.
- The property hosted an additional monitoring hut, and associated powerline to support monitoring efforts. It is unclear when monitoring efforts ceased at this location.



*Figure 2 1975 aerial image of the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area and surrounding area*

The 1989 aerial image (Figure 3) suggests that the infrastructure remained visible on the property, although it is unclear whether it was still maintained or in use. The network of unauthorized trails – most evident in the dune habitat – is clearly shown in the image.





*Figure 3 1989 aerial image of the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area and surrounding area*

By 2000 (Figure 4), most of the infrastructure was no longer visible; only the entrance, in its current location, remained. Conservation Authorities underwent significant financial and administrative changes in the 1990s, including staffing reductions; it is likely that the property received minimal investment and management between the 1989 and 2000 aerial images. The network of unauthorized trails, and the towpath along the river are evident in the 2000 aerial image.



*Figure 4 2000 aerial image of the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area and surrounding area*

Scots pine was historically used in reforestation efforts, with a relatively high abundance of Scots pine planted along the Cut, downstream of the current highway. Due to Scots pine that were likely planted at ARCA, as well as mature trees on adjacent properties seeding into the site, a significant population of Scots pine became established on the property, posing a threat to forest health and biodiversity. These trees may be observed in the 1989 and 2000 aerial images, but are most apparent in the 2020 aerial image (Figure 5). Several iterations of Scots pine management have been completed at the property by ABCA staff. Based on both documented management efforts, as well as those recalled through institutional knowledge, management occurred in 2010, 2019 and 2023.

In 2012, ABCA partnered with LSNT, which began assisting with property management and leading site enhancements. This strong partnership resulted in an exponential increase in management efforts at ARCA within a relatively short timeframe. LSNT shares aligned values, working to facilitate passive outdoor recreation while conserving and enhancing natural spaces in the Municipality of Lambton Shores.



Between 2012 and 2019, ABCA and LSNT collaborated to:

- Create an accessible loop trail, which was later extended in 2020
- Install an accessible lookout platform that overlooks the Ausable River
- Install a canoe and kayak launch to provide access to the Ausable River
- Create a trail that connects ARCA to other publicly accessible trails in Port Franks
- Partnered with the County of Lambton's Library Services to establish a Story Board Trail



*Figure 5 2020 aerial image of the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area and surrounding area*

The 2023 invasive tree management efforts had a broader focus than just Scots pine – which also included managing other non-native tree species, including Austrian pine, European buckthorn and Norway maple – all of which present a threat to the rich biodiversity present at the property. These efforts were successful in managing most of these populations, with noteworthy exceptions:

- A small population of Scots pine were left adjacent to residences located off Northville Crescent. These trees required more technical removal efforts, which the available budget did not support.
- A small population of Austrian pine were left along Highway 21 as the available budget did not support their removal
- Efforts were made to remove all Norway maple trees. However, considering the number of Norway maple trees present in residential areas, adjacent to the property, regular and ongoing management of Norway maple regeneration is expected.

Between 2020 and 2025, ABCA and LSNT collaborated to:

- Rehabilitate the stairs leading to the canoe and kayak launch
- Remove a small unused cinder block building (former location: 17N 429600 4785816)
- Install boot brushes to encourage visitors to clean their boots of mud, and debris with the goal of reducing the spread of invasive species
- Install a Wind Phone to provide visitors a place to grieve in nature
  - The Wind Phone was the first to be installed at a conservation area in Ontario, and it quickly gained recognition across the province. Since its installation, several other conservation authorities have implemented Wind Phones.
- Employ a multi-faceted approach to restore two-acres of eroding dune habitat adjacent to the river. Although vehicle access was historically a concern, the ongoing degradation of the dune was due to a random, intersecting maze of unauthorized pedestrian trails.
  - Invasive species were managed within, and adjacent to the dune habitat
  - Marram grass was sourced from the *Friends of Pinery Park* and planted to establish vegetation within the eroded dune area
  - Installed a boardwalk to direct pedestrian traffic through a centralized, and sustainable location within the dune
- Close a small section of trail at the property, which was causing significant erosion as it traversed a steep dune. LSNT supported the closure by installing suitable barriers and enhancing the trail that travelled perpendicular to the top of the former dune trail.
- Managed a population of periwinkle that likely encroached onto the ARCA from adjacent residential areas, or from unauthorized disposal of landscape waste.
  - The project was completed on a trial-basis, attempting solarization by covering the periwinkle with heavy duty tarps, anchored by woody-material, including Scots pine that had been removed. The goal of the solarization was to use a public space to raise awareness for invasive species, management, and employ a technique that landowners could utilize on their own backyards, with limited resources.

In 2024, the ABCA constructed a new privy-style washroom to replace the former privy-washroom (former location: 17N 429591 4785786).

The partnership between ABCA and LSNT resulted in significant enhancements between 2012 and 2025. The property was improved as a place for passive recreation and community connection, while also making substantial progress toward restoring and enhancing its ecological condition.

### Staffing

The property is managed in partnership with LSNT, a volunteer group dedicated to promoting, developing, and maintaining public nature trails in Lambton Shores and the surrounding area. ARCA does not have on-site staff; instead, it is overseen by staff based at ABCA's Administration Centre.

### Permitted Activities

Birdwatching	Fishing	Snowshoeing
Bicycling*	Geocaching	Picnicking
Canoeing and Kayaking	Hiking	
Cross-country skiing	Walking dogs on leash	

\*Bicycling permitted on enhanced surface (i.e. stone dust) pathway only

### Programs and Services

ARCA is a key part of ABCA's conservation lands, and passive recreation programs. It supports the organizations broader mandate by contributing to several core programs and services, including:

- Conservation Education Program
  - ARCA provides a space for hands-on, nature-based learning that fosters environmental awareness and appreciation. There are recommendations in this master plan that aim to enhance ARCA as an educational space.
- Flood and Erosion Control Structures
  - Along the river shoreline of ARCA, and surrounding areas, ABCA maintains a series of steel and rock armour structures. The structures protect the shoreline from scouring erosion, particularly during spring ice breakup on the river.

Beyond these defined programs, ARCA plays a vital role in integrated watershed management. Natural areas support essential ecological and hydrological functions, which support the core mandate of conservation authorities: protecting people and property from flooding and other natural hazards.

### Infrastructure

ARCA contains infrastructure that supports outdoor recreation activities, this includes a parking area, washroom, trails, accessible lookout platform, and a boardwalk. The infrastructure at ARCA is an asset to its operations, helping balance recreation opportunities with the ecological integrity of the property.

The boardwalk installed by LSNT through the sand dune is an example of how infrastructure can support a responsible balance between public access and ecological protection. Before the

boardwalk was in place, several unauthorized and meandering trails crossed the dune. These unauthorized trails led to trampling of vegetation and accelerated erosion, comprising the integrity of the sensitive dune habitat. The boardwalk provided a clear and navigable route for visitors, significantly reducing the formation of unauthorized trails in the dune. As a result, vegetation began to re-establish in previously disturbed areas, improving the overall health of the dune ecosystem.

Unless specifically addressed in the recommendations of this Master Plan, existing infrastructure is considered an asset to both the conservation area and the organization. Its maintenance, rehabilitation or replacement will be guided by ABCA's Capital Asset Management Plan (2024) and will be integrated into financial forecasts and annual budget preparations to ensure existing infrastructure remains safe and continues to support a high level of visitor satisfaction.

## Visitor and Community Use

### Visitor Numbers

The ABCA does not have visitor number data for the ARCA. However, anecdotal information suggests that the ARCA is relatively busy and experiencing increased use.

Visitor numbers increased – both from residents and tourists – after the LSNT installed the Wind Phone. The Wind Phone was the first to be installed at a conservation area in Ontario, and it quickly gained recognition across the province. Since its installation, several other conservation authorities have implemented Wind Phones.

### Events

The property is used to facilitate group hikes by local community groups and organizations. Overall, the ARCA sees minimal event activity.

## Cultural and Heritage Resources

While ARCA is situated in an area with a rich cultural heritage that extends beyond what is described in this plan, this section includes only the information documented in previous plans. ARCA's unique location provides visitors with a first-hand view of the significant landscape alterations made by settlers that have influenced the area both at the property and upstream.

Between 1872 and 1875 a large canal was excavated from the Ausable River northeast of Thedford directly through the sand dunes to Port Franks – the canal was created to drain the former Lake George, Lake Burwell and surrounding wetlands to promote drainage for agricultural production. This extensive project significantly altered the landscape and is known as 'The Cut;' the ARCA is located beside the cut.

ARCA provides an opportunity to partner with the County of Lambton's Cultural Services department to formalize ARCA as a location to view these historical landscape alterations.

## Natural Areas

### Watershed Context

ARCA is located within the Ausable River watershed, in an area of the watershed referred to as the 'Lower Ausable' sub-watershed. The property is adjacent to the cut, approximately three kilometres upstream of Lake Huron, and approximately one kilometre upstream of the mouth of the Old Ausable Channel (OAC). Given its proximity to the lake, wind direction over the lake may influence water levels at the property. Seasonal flows and weather-related factors, such as ice jams, may also affect water levels.

The upstream land use is dominated by agricultural production, including both row crop production (e.g., corn, beans and wheat) as well as vegetable (e.g., onion, cabbage, turnip) and fruit orchard production.

The nearby community of Port Franks is largely a cottage-community but does include both seasonal and permanent residents.

While the broader watershed is dominated by agricultural land use, ARCA is part of a relatively contiguous forest system that stretches from Kettle Point, to just south of Grand Bend. This an ecologically diverse area of the watershed that contributes to overall watershed, with notable contributions towards forest cover and streamside cover.

### Site Characteristics

ARCA is a diverse property which includes several ecosystem types, ranging from restored areas hosting young forest, to oak woodland and dune habitat. The soils, topography and Ausable River contribute to the exceptional diversity on this property.

The young forest, and restored areas exist primarily where past management resulted in disturbances to the property. Some of these disturbances creating openings large enough that reforestation efforts were undertaken. Although some reforestation was completed with undesirable species – Scots and Austrian pine – it created conditions that supported native species regeneration. The recent removal of Scots and Austrian pine will help release desirable native species and promote succession toward a diverse forest habitat suited to the local landscape.

The oak forests exist primarily on the sandy-dune soils of the property, as this forest type is well suited to these conditions.

Dune habitat persists in an area of the property where ongoing disturbance prevented the dune from succeeding to early successional habitat. Recent management efforts have ceased much of the unauthorized disturbance that was not sustainable for long-term management. However, this Master Plan considers sustainable management approaches that offset succession to encourage habitat diversity.



## Environmental Designations and Protections

Environmental designations and protections are an important component of conserving the ecological integrity of ARCA. This master plan may not present a comprehensive inventory of environmental designations and protections.

### *Conservation Authorities Act*

Areas of ARCA are subject to *Ontario Regulation 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits* under the *Conservation Authorities Act*. Ontario Regulation 41/24 directs development away from natural hazards, supporting the core mandate of conservation authorities of managing watershed resources and protecting life and property.

### *Municipal Zoning By-Law*

The Municipality of Lambton Shores Municipal Zoning By-Law establishes and regulates land use by implementing the general policies from the Municipality of Lambton Shores Official Plan. The zoning regulations applicable to ARCA is Open Space – 1 (OS1).

### *Woodlands Conservation By-Law*

The forested areas of ARCA are subject to regulation under the County of Lambton's Woodlands Conservation By-Law. The Woodlands Conservation By-Law aims to promote good forestry practices, and conserve forest habitat, and forest resources for future generations.

## Natural Heritage Augmentation

The ecosystem benefits provided by the natural areas at ARCA extend beyond property boundaries by contributing to overall ecosystem health.

The natural areas at ARCA build upon the forests and other ecosystems that create one of the largest contiguous forest habitats in southern Ontario, west of Toronto. Although some fragmentation is present, it is minimal when compared the larger landscape of south-western Ontario. The ARCA is a component of a forest that spans approximately twenty-five kilometres of Lake Huron's south-east shoreline, from the north end of the Pinery Provincial Park to Kettle Point. Through sound management, and collaboration, much of this habitat may remain intact.

The watershed model recognizes the direct link between land management and aquatic health. The natural areas at ARCA, along adjacent natural areas, play a positive role in supporting healthy aquatic ecosystems. This contribution is both in the aquatic ecosystems adjacent to the terrestrial ecosystems, as well as throughout the larger, downstream areas of the Ausable River and Lake Huron.

## Species at Risk

Ontario's Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC) provides species-at-risk (SAR) data using one-kilometre grids, two of which apply to ARCA. Several SAR have been documented within this area.

It is essential that staff are aware of these species, or their potential presence, and manage the site accordingly. Staff maintain detailed records and monitor for new occurrences. Responsible management not only supports terrestrial species but also protects and enhances conditions for nearby and downstream aquatic species.

To help safeguard SAR from potential threats, detailed information is not published in this plan.

## Summary of Prior Management Plan Implementation

Status	Action Item
Manage aquatic and terrestrial resources to provide habitat for species, including Species at Risk.	<b>Implemented/ Ongoing.</b>
Update the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems inventory and assessment.	<b>Implemented/ Ongoing.</b> Aquatic and terrestrial inventories have been completed since the last plan. It is important to inventory and update this information periodically; therefore, it is considered an ongoing action item.
Control unauthorized vehicle use that is eroding the dunes.	<b>Implemented.</b> Although unauthorized access remains a potential threat to the property, it has been substantially deterred.
Encourage research and scientific use of the property.	<b>Ongoing.</b> ABCA permits research and scientific study through a Special Use Permit system. Researchers provide their findings to ABCA, augmenting institutional knowledge of the site.
Cut down invasive exotic trees.	<b>Implemented/ Ongoing.</b> Significant progress was made in reducing the presence of invasive exotic trees, primarily Scots pine and Norway maple. Ongoing efforts are required due to the presence of nearby mature trees that contribute seed to the property.
Establish a tall grass prairie demonstration site.	<b>Implemented.</b> A small, tall grass prairie was established in partnership with the Ministry of Transportation.
Improve the trail system by creating a guide and directional signs. Link the trails with Lambton County and Lambton Wildlife Inc. properties in Port Franks.	<b>Implemented.</b> A defined trail system, including connections to other trails, was established in partnership with LSNT.

Install signs to encourage boaters to leave a minimal wake in order to reduce riverbank erosion.	<b>Not proceeding.</b> Although this is a recommended practice for watercraft users, the ABCA does not have the capacity, resources or authority to enforce it.
Provide technical advice to the Sarnia District Scouts to help them address the environmental issues at their camp.	<b>Implemented/ Ongoing.</b> The ABCA maintains a strong partnership with the Camp Attawandaron committee to support them with environmental initiatives.

## Management Statements

To support the Management Goal for ARCA, the ABCA provides the following management statements:

- To conserve and enhance the unique ecosystems that support biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations
- To encourage public appreciation and awareness of unique natural and cultural features.
- To foster appreciation through experience by providing opportunities for low-impact, passive recreational activities and educational programs.
- To provide access to the Ausable River for nature appreciation and passive recreational activities.
- To foster and support partnerships that align with the management goal.

## Implementation

The following recommendations support implementation of the Master Plan in line with management goals and the CLS (2024). The recommendations propose enhancements and operational changes at ARCA, with existing operations assumed to continue unless specifically addressed.

### Partnerships

**Recommendation 1.1:** Work with the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nations to better incorporate traditional knowledge, as well as indigenous history, and modern uses of the land.

**Description:** ABCA acknowledges the original stewards of this land and is grateful to have the opportunity to meet and work in this territory. Through collaboration with the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nations, traditional knowledge can be integrated into management decisions. To further acknowledge the long-standing connection Indigenous people have to the land, Indigenous history, traditional ceremonies and modern land uses can be better reflected in cultural heritage resources and educational programming.

**Recommendation 1.2:** Work with the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and local partners to safely and effectively connect the Rotary Nature Trail with the ARCA.

**Description:** The Rotary Club of Grand Bend established the Rotary Nature Trail, which connects the community of Grand Bend, to the Pinery Provincial Park. The trail is located alongside Highway 21 and currently ends approximately 4.5 kilometres north of ARCA. In partnership with the MTO, and local partners, the trail could be extended to ARCA – connecting the trail to the conservation area, and providing a safe, effective, active transportation route that connects the communities of Port Franks and Grand Bend. The bridge over the Bayfield River, along Highway 21, demonstrates where MTO led by example, and integrated active transportation routes into bridge infrastructure.

### Visitor Numbers, Activities, and Programming

**Recommendation 2.1:** Explore partnerships, and technology to passively collect visitor use information to better guide management decisions.

**Description:** The ABCA does not currently have visitor use information for ARCA. Employing tools to collect this information would support data-driven management decisions.

**Recommendation 2.2:** Establish the ARCA as a designated site for ABCA’s Conservation Education programs that support environmental awareness, stewardship and community learning.

**Description:** The property provides excellent opportunities for conservation education, offering a wide diversity of habitats and species within a relatively small area. Its location adjacent to Bluewater Highway, along with existing infrastructure – including a parking area, accessible trail, privy washroom and accessible lookout platforms – supports high-quality, meaningful learning experiences. However, the property lacks shelter, such as a pavilion, which is a limiting factor in offering education programs. The organization should consider a cohesive approach that provides shelter and establishes a Collaborative Learning Space (Recommendation #4.1) to support high-quality, inclusive learning experiences.

### Environmental

**Recommendation 3.1:** Remove all Norway maple and Scots pine from ARCA; continue to monitor and manage regeneration.

**Description:** Norway maple and Scots pine are invasive species that impact biodiversity in forested areas. Norway maple is often planted as a shade tree in residential areas. Scots pine was historically used in reforestation efforts and were planted at ARCA. Removing these invasive trees from ARCA will reduce the immediate seed source; however, ongoing monitoring and management will be required due to nearby seed sources – especially with Norway maple.

**Recommendation 3.2:** Complete annual invasive species monitoring by trained staff to ensure the ‘Early Detection and Rapid Response’ (EDRR) framework for detecting and managing invasive species is utilized.

**Description:** EDRR is recognized as the most effective, and cost-effective approach for managing invasive species. Staff who are trained to identify invasive species will monitor for their presence, and if invasive species are detected, management will be employed accordingly. Invasive species

management may be prioritized at the direction trained staff; species of greater concern for ecological health and risk management (e.g., Dog strangling vine, Giant hogweed, invasive phragmites, oak wilt, oriental bittersweet) will be prioritized.

**Recommendation 3.3:** Facilitate citizen science opportunities to track biodiversity, and habitat succession.

**Description:** Citizen sciences involves public participation and collaboration in scientific research initiatives. Modern tools, such as iNaturalist and photo monitoring stations, provide opportunities to engage visitors in the collection and tracking of ecological data while fostering environmental awareness, and appreciation of ARCA's natural values.

**Recommendation 3.4:** Manage woody species encroachment within the dune habitat, to support habitat diversity.

**Description:** Significant progress was made to mitigate threats to the dune habitat that had caused uncontrolled erosion and overall habitat degradation. As the dune continues to succeed, ABCA should manage encroaching woody species, as resources allow, to promote dune habitat and the biodiversity that this area supports.

### Infrastructure

**Recommendation 4.1:** Partner with Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nations to co-create a Collaborative Learning Space that supports shared learning, cultural exchange, and mutual stewardship.

**Description:** Conservation areas provide important spaces for community connection and learning, offering an excellent opportunity to establish a Collaborative Learning Space that incorporates Indigenous traditional knowledge and provides space for inclusive participation in traditional ceremonies. The Collaborative Learning Space should be developed in alignment with conservation education goals (Recommendation #2.2) to ensure meaningful, respectful and collaborative learning experiences.

**Recommendation 4.2:** Explore options for establishing a bed-level canoe and kayak launch to facilitate access to the Ausable River.

**Description:** Access to the Ausable River at ARCA is currently provided via a launch that must be seasonally removed and is affected by fluctuating water levels and boat wake throughout the recreation season. A bed-level access option, similar to launches located on the Bayfield and Saugeen River, should be explored to support long-term, sustainable river access at this location. ABCA's Water and Planning Department must be closely consulted throughout the planning and potential implementation of this work.

**Recommendation 4.3:** Enhance the Herbert Street entrance to facilitate access for the adjacent neighbourhood in Port Franks.



**Description:** The Herbert Street access exists at a lower standard than other property access points. Recognizing that over sixty properties are located within a one-half kilometre walk of this entrance, it is recommended that the entrance be improved, to provide an active transportation asset in the community. The entrance should be enhanced by delineating it through signage, and trail markers; and addressing the narrow entrance, to ensure safe passage. The entrance may be further enhanced by installing a bicycle storage rack, encouraging visitors to use active transportation methods, while adhering to the rules of the conservation area. The entrance should continue as a single-track natural pathway that facilitates access, and outdoor recreation while mitigating its ecological footprint.

## *ABCA Program Report*

**To:** Board of Directors  
**From:** Nathan Schoelier, Stewardship and Land Manager  
**Date:** February 19, 2026  
**Subject:** Vehicle Tender

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The 2026 Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) budget included funds for the capital purchase of a pickup truck to replace the 2017 Chevrolet Colorado. The truck supports the programs and services of all departments at ABCA.

This purchase is funded through the motor pool, which operates on a cost-recovery by-use basis to support the maintenance and replacement of vehicles and equipment. The parameters for the truck were specific to the needs of the ABCA.

On January 19, staff sent requests for quotations to all watershed dealers with a closing date of Monday, February 16, 2026.

The results of the tender will be made available to the Board of Directors at the February 19, 2026, Board meeting.

# *ABCA Program Report*

**To:** Board of Directors  
**Date:** February 19, 2026  
**From:** Mari Veliz, Healthy Watersheds Manager  
**Subject:** Huronview Innovative Drainage Demonstration  
**Report Type:** ACTION REQUIRED

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## **Recommendation:**

THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors authorize staff to work with the Huronview Design Committee to ensure that the best value solar pump be procured for the Huronview sub-irrigation project.

## **Background:**

In June 2019, Huron County Soil and Crop Improvement Association (HCSCIA) installed three innovative systems for side-by-side research and demonstration on 60 acres near Clinton, ON.

**Subsurface:** Drainage tile laterals will be laid on contour across the slope with a 0.1% grade and control gates at the main, 22 gates in total. The aim is to hold water back in the tile as needed, to reduce nutrient loss and downstream flows, potentially contributing to subsurface irrigation. The water quality and flow rates will be compared with a conventionally tiled and an untiled area.

**Surface:** Three contoured terraces will be built on a smaller sub-basin of the field to intercept and redirect surface water to French drains or Hickenbottom inlets that outlet to a wetland. The terraces will be broad-based to allow for regular cropping and various inlet structures will be demonstrated.

**Tile Spacing:** a side-by-side comparison of 30 foot and 15- foot lateral tile.

To assess the effectiveness of the different tile approaches at the conclusion of this project, the tiling approaches were monitored from a water quality and water quantity perspective.

In 2025, the ABCA secured funding to support a further innovation – sub-irrigation. The design is being finalized by a committee comprised of drainage contractors, B.M. Ross, the Huron County Soil and Crop Improvement Association, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA), and the University of Guelph.

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to review the procurement process for the installation of the **sub-irrigation system**.

Funding for the project has been secured from (OMAFRA). As per the proposal that was accepted by the OMAFA, the costs associated with the works did not include the potential costs of a solar pump for a portion of the sub-irrigation project. Funds are forthcoming with a stipulation that they would be spent by March 31, 2026. This is a highly innovative approach to acquire power and there are not many people that have this expertise.

The ABCA procurement procedures states that:

*Public tender shall be required for purchase, rent, service contract and construction contract with a unit cost in excess of \$25,000.00. The approval of the Board of Directors shall also be obtained for any contract or purchase material from other than the lowest bidder where the cost exceeds \$25,000.00.*

Due to the uniqueness of this project, and the absence of local expertise, staff are requesting authorization from the ABCA Board of Directors to work with the Huronview Design Committee to procure the best value solar pump without the need for multiple quotations.

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# ***MINUTES***

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## **STRIKING COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, January 15, 2026  
9:30 a.m.**

**Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Boardroom and Via Zoom  
Morrison Dam Conservation Area**

### **DIRECTORS PRESENT**

Adrian Cornelissen, Ray Chartrand, Marissa Vaughan

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Davin Heinbuck, Abigail Gutteridge

### **WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Ray Chartrand welcomed those on Zoom and in the office to the meeting and called the meeting to order at 9:29 a.m.

### **APPOINTMENT OF RECORDING SECRETARY**

**MOTION #SC 01/26**

**Moved by Adrian Cornelissen  
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan**

**“RESOLVED, THAT Abigail Gutteridge be appointed recording secretary for the Striking Committee meeting.”**

**Carried.**

### **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

**MOTION #SC 02/26**

**Moved by Marissa Vaughan  
Seconded by Adrian Cornelissen**

**“RESOLVED, THAT Ray Chartrand be appointed Chair for the Striking Committee meeting.”**

**Carried.**



APPROVAL OF MINUTES**MOTION #SC 03/26**

**Moved by Adrian Cornelissen  
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan**

**“RESOLVED, THAT the Minutes from the Striking Committee Meeting held on January 29, 2026 be approved as circulated.”**

**Carried.**

BUSINESS OUT OF THE MINUTES

Davin Heinbuck, General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer, reminded the Striking Committee members that in reviewing terms of reference for various committees of the ABCA, it was noticed that Terms of Reference for the Striking Committee could not be found. While looking back through ABCA Board of Directors Minutes, it seems that the Striking Committee (sometimes called the Nominating Committee) met on an ad hoc basis, until approximately 1983, when the committee began meeting annually. Staff took this opportunity to draft up Terms of Reference for the Striking Committee, which formalize the structure and responsibilities of the Committee. The Striking Committee members were all in agreement with the Terms of Reference.

**MOTION #SC 04/26**

**Moved by Marissa Vaughan  
Seconded by Adrian Cornelissen**

**“RESOLVED, THAT the draft Striking Committee Terms of Reference be presented to the ABCA Board of Directors for approval.”**

**Carried.**

STANDING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

The committee reviewed the ABCA Standing Committee appointments for 2026, making some minor adjustments for changes to staff and Directors.

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation

The Foundation has 9 volunteer Directors and each year the Authority reviews the appointments. The following individuals have agreed to sit on the ABCF Board of Directors: **Janet Clarke, Dave Frayne, George Irvin, Roger Lewington, David McClure, Anne Melady, Charlie Miner, Bob Radtke, Robert Norris, Abigail Gutteridge-Secretary, Tina Crown-Treasurer, Davin Heinbuck – Staff Advisor, and Jackson Janmaat – ABCF Assistant.** At present, Jackson Janmaat is on parental leave, and so her position is being filled by Micaela Lubberts.

Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation established the **Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy** in 2011. The following individuals agree to sit on the HTLTC volunteer Board of Directors: **Don Farwell, Steve Bowers, Alison Lobb, Max Morden, Jessica Smeekens, Paul Spittal, Kerry Teskey, Roger Lewington, Abigail Gutteridge-Secretary, Tina Crown-Treasurer,**

**Davin Heinbuck-Staff Advisor, and Nathan Schoelier – Property Management Advisor.** Philip Walden retired from the Land Trust at the end of 2024, and two more directors have expressed interest in stepping back from the Land Trust. However, they have agreed to remain on the Board until new members are found. There is currently a posting for positions on the Land Trust Board.

#### Arkona Lions Museum Management Committee

Arkona Lions Club and the ABCA have an agreement regarding operation and maintenance of the Museum and Information Centre. The Committee meets 2 times per year. Staff are represented by Nathan Schoelier, Stewardship & Conservation Lands Manager, Mike Bax, Rock Glen CA Superintendent, Cassie Greidanus, Conservation Education Supervisor and Abigail Gutteridge, Recording Secretary.

It is recommended that the following continue to be on the Arkona Lions Museum Management Committee for 2026: **Wayne Shipley - representative for Adelaide-Metcalf/Middlesex Centre, David Marsh – representative for Lambton Shores/Warwick.**

#### Conservation Ontario

Each conservation authority is permitted two voting delegates on Conservation Ontario Council. It is recommended that our representatives continue to be the **Chair and Vice Chair, with ABCA General Manager as alternate.**

#### Human Resources Management Committee

A Human Resources Management Committee meets at such times as deemed necessary by the Chair of the Committee. The committee is to ensure employment equity, pay equity, a healthy and safe work environment and maintain a positive workplace environment. Staff are represented by the General Manager and Recording Secretary Abigail Gutteridge (Corporate Services Coordinator).

It is recommended that the **Chair, Vice Chair and Past Chair (alternate – Dave Jewitt, representative from Central Huron)** continue as members to the HR Management Committee for 2026.

#### Source Protection Authority

Established in 2007, the role of the Source Protection Authority is one of reviewing and consultation for the Source Protection Committee. Staff are represented by Co-Program Supervisors Elizabeth Balfour and Donna Clarkson, General Manager Davin Heinbuck and Recording Secretary Abigail Gutteridge. As Elizabeth Balfour is currently on parental leave, Ellen Westelaken, DWSP Specialist, is filling her role.

It is recommended that the **ABCA Board of Directors** continue as the *Source Protection Authority*.

The Source Protection Authority is governed by an agreement with the Maitland Valley Source

Protection Authority, which lays out the Terms of Reference for both Source Protection Authorities, as well as the Joint Management Committee.

#### Drinking Water Source Protection Joint Management Committee

The Joint Management Committee was formed in 2005 with representation from the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority and Maitland Valley Conservation Authority to oversee development and implementation of Source Protection Plans for the Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley source protection regions. **Staff are represented by Co-Program Supervisors Elizabeth Balfour and Donna Clarkson, General Manager Davin Heinbuck and Recording Secretary Abigail Gutteridge.** As Elizabeth Balfour is currently on parental leave, Ellen Westelaken, DWSP Specialist, is filling her role.

It is recommended the following be representatives from the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority continue to sit on the DWSP Joint Management Committee: **Chair and Vice Chair, (alternate – Marissa Vaughan, representative from South Huron).**

#### Source Protection Committee

The Source Protection Committee is made up of twelve members of the public who represent different sectors (i.e., Public at Large, Environment, Industry, etc.). **The ABCA General Manager is appointed by the Source Protection Authority as Liaison to the Source Protection Committee. Staff representatives include Elizabeth Balfour and Donna Clarkson, Co-Program Supervisors, and Abigail Gutteridge as Recording Secretary.** As Elizabeth Balfour is currently on parental leave, Ellen Westelaken, DWSP Specialist, is filling her role.

The Source Protection Committee is governed by Ontario Regulation 288/07, and the Rules of Procedure were adopted by the Committee in 2007.

#### Striking Committee

The Striking Committee meets annually to recommend appointments to the Standing Committees and review the schedule of Board meetings for the upcoming year. **Staff are represented by General Manager Davin Heinbuck and Secretary Abigail Gutteridge.**

It is recommended the following continue to sit on the Striking Committee: **Chair, Vice Chair and Past Chair (alternate – Joey Groot, representative for Bluewater)** for 2026.

#### Water Response Team

The ABCA appoints three municipal representatives and a Secretary to the Ausable Bayfield Water Response Team (WRT). An ABCA representative will be Chair of the WRT which addresses low water conditions in the Ausable, Bayfield and Parkhill watersheds by reviewing precipitation, stream flow and groundwater data collected by the ABCA. The Committee meets when deemed necessary under the direction of the Ontario Low Water Response Plan. It is recommended that the following individuals be appointed to the Ausable Bayfield Water Response Team for 2024: **Chair Ray Chartrand - representative for Huron East, Steve Herold –**

***representative for West Perth, and Jaden Hodgins – representative for Lucan Biddulph. Staff are represented by General Manager Davin Heinbuck, Water Resources Technologist Christie Brown, and Abigail Gutteridge as WRT Secretary.***

Terms of Reference for the Water Response Team are reviewed yearly.

#### RECOMMENDATION

**MOTION #SC 05/26**

**Moved by Adrian Cornelissen  
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan**

**“RESOLVED, THAT the recommendation for appointments to the ABCA Standing Committees be presented to the Board of Directors at the February 19, 2026 Annual Meeting for their consideration and approval.”**

**Carried.**

#### 2026 MEETING SCHEDULE

Abigail Gutteridge, Corporate Services Coordinator, presented the proposed schedule of dates for the 2026 Board of Directors meetings (attached). A schedule for staff and management team meetings is also available as the Board is invited to attend any of the meetings. The Striking Committee made one small change to the schedule, which was to move the October Board of Directors meeting to the fourth week of October instead of the third.

#### RECOMMENDATION

**MOTION #SC 06/26**

**Moved by Marissa Vaughan  
Seconded by Adrian Cornelissen**

**“RESOLVED, THAT the 2026 schedule of Board meetings be recommended for approval to the Board of Directors.”**

**Carried.**

#### NEW BUSINESS

1. Davin Heinbuck, General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer, provided the Striking Committee with some updates regarding the proposed consolidation of Conservation Authorities. At a recent General Managers Meeting, it was mentioned that an estimated 3000 responses were submitted to the ERO posting, at least 100 of them being from municipalities (possibly closer to 200). The Striking Committee discussed the options to bring up questions during the “Bear Pit” at the upcoming Rural Ontario Municipal Association Conference; however, Chair Chartrand reported that the way the session is held has changed, and that there are specific topics for discussion.
2. Davin Heinbuck also gave a brief update on the Fee Freeze, which has been ongoing for several years. He noted that Conservation Authorities did not receive a letter extending

the freeze, so technically it is no longer in effect. Staff hope to bring a report to the Board in February.

3. Davin Heinbuck also reported that he is working on setting up a meeting with Matthew Rae, MPP for Perth-Wellington. Davin is working with Maitland Valley Conservation Authority and Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, and is hoping to include representatives from the Municipality of West Perth.
4. Davin Heinbuck reported that the Honourable Lisa Thompson addressed a letter to Minister McCarthy regarding the proposed consolidation. This letter is now public and can be shared.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:11 a.m.

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Ray Chartrand  
Chair

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Abigail Gutteridge  
Recording Secretary



## **2026 ABCA Standing Committees**

Appointments recommended by Striking Committee to Board of Directors

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### **Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation**

(Board members are appointed by ABCA)

Janet Clarke	Charles Miner, Chair
Dave Frayne	George Irvin, Vice Chair
Roger Lewington	<i>Abigail Gutteridge- Secretary</i>
David McClure	<i>Tina Crown- Treasurer</i>
Anne Melady	<i>Davin Heinbuck - Staff Advisor</i>
Bob Radtke	<i>Jackson Janmaat - ABCF Assistant</i>
Robert Norris	<i>(on leave)</i>
	<i>Micaela Lubberts – ABCF Assistant</i>

### **Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy**

(HTLTC was established by ABCF and Board members are appointed by ABCA)

Steve Bowers	Kerry Teskey, Interim Chair
Don Farwell	Max Morden, Past Chair
Alison Lobb	<i>Abigail Gutteridge - Secretary</i>
Jessica Smeekens	<i>Tina Crown- Treasurer</i>
Paul Spittal	<i>Davin Heinbuck - Staff Advisor</i>
Roger Lewington	<i>Nathan Schoelier- Property Management</i>
	<i>Advisor</i>

### **Arkona Lions Museum Management Committee**

Municipality of Lambton Shores/Warwick - *Dave Marsh*  
Municipality of Adelaide-Metcalf/Middlesex Centre - *Wayne Shipley*  
Staff - *Nathan Schoelier, Mike Bax, Cassie Greidanus, Abigail Gutteridge*

### **Conservation Ontario**

Chair, Vice Chair, and ABCA General Manager as Alternate

### **Human Resources Management Committee**

Chair, Vice Chair, Past Chair and Alternate – *David Jewitt, representative from Central Huron*  
Staff - *ABCA General Manager, Abigail Gutteridge*

### **Source Protection Authority**

ABCA Board of Directors  
Staff - *ABCA General Manager, Elizabeth Balfour (on leave)/Donna Clarkson-Co-Program*  
*Supervisors, Ellen Westelaken – DWSP Specialist*  
*Abigail Gutteridge - Recording Secretary*

### **Source Protection Committee**

ABCA General Manager, Liaison appointed by the Source Protection Authority  
*Staff – Elizabeth Balfour (on leave)/Donna Clarkson Co-Program Supervisors, Ellen Westelaken –  
DSWP Specialist  
Abigail Gutteridge - Recording Secretary*

### **Joint Management Committee (DWSP)**

Chair & Vice Chair or Alternate – *Marissa Vaughan, representative from South Huron  
ABCA General Manager, Elizabeth Balfour (on leave)/Donna Clarkson-Co-Program Supervisors,  
Ellen Westelaken – DWSP Specialist  
Abigail Gutteridge-Recording Secretary*

### **Striking Committee**

Chair, Vice Chair, Past Chair and Alternate –*Joey Groot, representative from Bluewater  
Staff – ABCA General Manager, Abigail Gutteridge*

### **Low Water Response Team**

Chair – Municipality of Huron East - *Ray Chartrand*  
Municipality of West Perth - *Steve Herold*  
Municipality of Lucan Biddulph - *Jaden Hodgins*  
*Staff - Davin Heinbuck, Christie Brown, Abigail Gutteridge*

(Chair is Ex-officio member on all Standing Committees)

## 2026 Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

Meeting time will be 10:00 a.m. with the exceptions of March and December

February 19, 2026	Annual Meeting at 10:00 a.m.
March 26, 2026	Board of Directors at 2:30 p.m. followed by Partner Appreciation Evening
April 16, 2026	Board of Directors at 10:00 a.m.
May 21, 2026	Board of Directors at 10:00 a.m.
June 18, 2026	Board of Directors at 10:00 a.m.
July 16, 2026	Board of Directors at 10:00 a.m.
August 20, 2026	Board of Directors (if needed)
September 17, 2026	Board of Directors at 10:00 a.m.
October 8, 2026	Budget Committee Meeting at 9:30 am
October 22, 2026	Board of Directors at 10:00 a.m.
November 19, 2026	Board of Directors at 10:00 a.m.
December 17, 2026	Board of Directors at 2:30 pm followed by Christmas Dinner

NOTE: as per Regulations of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, December 21, 2000  
*The Chair shall call regular meetings of the Board of Directors, 4 days written notice, at least ten times each year, including one meeting prior to March 1st and one meeting after November 1st.*

**Office closed..... Wednesday, December 24 at noon and reopen Monday, January 4, 2027**

## 2026 Conservation Ontario Meetings and Conferences

Conservation Ontario Council Meetings..... April 13 (AGM), June 22, September 21, December 7  
 ROMA Conference (Toronto).....January 18-20  
 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (Ottawa).....August 16-19

## Terms of Reference

# Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Striking Committee

### Background:

In accordance with Section 18 (2) of the *Conservation Authorities Act*, a Conservation Authority may establish advisory boards or committees as it considers appropriate for specific matters. As such, the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) established the Striking Committee (sometimes called Nominating Committee) on an ad hoc basis, until approximately 1983, when the committee began meeting annually.

### Purpose:

The purpose of the Striking Committee is to make recommendations to the ABCA Board of Directors regarding the member composition of standing and ad hoc committees for the ensuing year. In addition, the Striking Committee will make recommendations for the meeting dates for the ABCA Board of Directors Meetings for the coming year.

### Composition:

- The ABCA Striking Committee shall be comprised of three members of the ABCA Board of Directors; namely the Chair, Vice-Chair and Past Chair. An alternate member may also be appointed, in the event that one of the positions is not filled at the time of the meeting.
- Two staff members shall serve in an advisory and administrative support capacity. The two staff members shall be the General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer and Corporate Services Coordinator, or their appointed alternates. ABCA staff advisors shall not be voting members.

### Terms of Membership:

Voting members shall serve on the Striking Committee while they are in the role of Chair, Vice-Chair, and Past Chair; no more than two years in each capacity (as per the terms of service for the ABCA Board of Directors).

## Responsibilities and Structure:

1. The Striking Committee shall convene prior to the Annual General Meeting of the ABCA Board of Directors.
2. Quorum shall be a simple majority of the members.
3. The Striking Committee shall review and appoint/nominate members to standing and ad-hoc committees of the Board for the next year.
4. The Striking Committee shall determine the dates for ABCA Board of Directors meetings for the ensuing year.
5. The Striking Committee shall report to the ABCA Board of Directors the recommendations of the Committee regarding:
  - a. Members who should serve on standing and ad-hoc committees for the ensuing year, and
  - b. The dates of ABCA Board of Directors meetings for the ensuing year.
6. Minutes, including recommendations to the ABCA Board of Directors, shall be prepared by the Committee Secretary, and be circulated where practical with the agenda package in advance of the next ABCA Board of Directors meeting.

Approved by the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

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Ray Chartrand  
Chair

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Davin Heinbuck  
General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer