



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thursday, April 16, 2026

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Administration Centre
Morrison Dam Conservation Area

10:00 a.m.

AGENDA

1. Chair's Welcome and Call to Order
2. Land Acknowledgement Statement
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest
5. Disclosure of intention to record this meeting by video and/or audio device
6. Approval of Minutes from March 26, 2026
7. **Business Out of the Minutes**
 - CA Consolidation Update – Davin Heinbuck
8. **Presentation – Investment Update** – Adam Skillen, *Skillen Investment Management*
9. **Program Reports**
 - Report 1: (a) Development Review (O Reg 41/24) – Jaden Schoelier
 - (b) Violations/Appeals Update – Andrew Bicknell
 - Report 2: Draft Annual Pay Grid Adjustment Policy
 - Report 3: Ausable River Cut Conservation Area Master Plan – Nathan Schoelier
 - Report 4: 1st Quarter Profit & Loss Statement – Tina Crown
10. Committee Reports
11. **Correspondence**
12. **New Business**
13. Committee of the Whole
14. Adjournment

Source Protection Authority Meeting to follow

Upcoming Meetings and Events

May 21, 2026
June 18, 2026

Board of Directors Meeting – 10:00 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting – 10:00 a.m.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thursday, March 26, 2026

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Boardroom
Morrison Dam Conservation Area

DIRECTORS PRESENT

Ray Chartrand, Adrian Cornelissen, Joey Groot, Jaden Hodgins, Dave Jewitt, Dave Marsh, Wayne Shipley, Marissa Vaughan

DIRECTORS ABSENT

Steve Herold

STAFF PRESENT

Andrew Bicknell, Christie Brown, Tina Crown, Millie Ghorbankhani, Abbie Gutteridge, Davin Heinbuck, Brian Horner, Daniel King, Jaden Schoelier.

OTHERS PRESENT

Paul Seebach, *Seebach and Company*

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 23/26

**Moved Wayne Shipley
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan**

“RESOLVED, THAT the agenda for the March 26, 2026, 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 24/26**

**Moved by Jaden Hodgins
Seconded by Joey Groot**

“RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held on February 19, 2026, and the motions therein be approved as circulated.”

Carried.

BUSINESS OUT OF THE MINUTES

None.

PRESENTATION

Paul Seebach, of Seebach and Company, presented the 2025 audited financial statement for the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority. There were no audit issues found or unusual transactions. He noted that while the bank appears to be down at the end of the year, there were a number of receivables that came in at the end of the year, which will be included in 2026’s financial statement. The Drinking Water Source Protection Program audited statement was also presented at this time.

MOTION #BD 25/26

**Moved by Dave Jewitt
Seconded by Adrian Cornelissen**

“RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approve the 2025 audited financial statement as presented.”

Carried.

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 5 *Applications for Permission* and 5 *Minor Works Applications*.

MOTION #BD 26/26

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

“RESOLVED, THAT the Board of Directors affirm the approval of applications as presented in Program Report # 1 – a) Development Review.”

Carried.

(b) Violation/Appeals Update

Andrew Bicknell, Water and Planning Manager, provided an update regarding the Ontario Land Tribunal Hearing, which wrapped up prior to the end of 2025. He noted that the decision was reported as of February 19, 2026, which was in favour of both the ABCA position and Municipality of Lambton Shore’s position. The 30 day appeal period concluded two days ago, and as of yet, Andy has not heard of any appeal.

MOTION #BD 27/26

**Moved by Joey Groot
Seconded by Jaden Hodgins**

“RESOLVED, THAT the Board of Directors receive the verbal Violations and Appeals update as presented.”

Carried.

2. Communications Strategy Update

Tim Cumming, Communication Coordinator, presented an updated Communications Strategy, which is intended to replace the previous Communications Plan, presented to the Board of Directors in 2015. He noted that the strategy was prepared by a team of ABCA staff, and had previously been reviewed by the Management Team. This communications committee looked for ways to build upon previous communications successes, as well as enhance public outreach and engagement. They felt that a strategy, as opposed to a plan, with a longer-term approach would serve as a framework for other communications planning documents. This strategy lays out a number of guiding principles, each with a goal, priorities and performance measures, along with some recommendations within a timeline over the next five years. Tim noted that staff have already begun to implement communications using this strategy and is noting some success.

MOTION #BD 28/26

**Moved by Wayne Shipley
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan**

“RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the proposed *Communications Strategy (2026 – 2031)*.”

Carried.

3. Flood Emergency Planning Meeting

Daniel King, Water Resources Engineer, presented an update regarding the 2026 annual Flood Emergency Planning meeting. This yearly event is held for staff from member municipalities, as well as other stakeholders who are involved in emergency response. At the meeting on February 26,

2026, there were 24 attendees from seven municipalities, along with staff from Huron, Lambton and Middlesex Counties, as well as the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. Overall, ABCA staff continue to receive positive feedback about this annual meeting to discuss the various roles in flooding emergency response.

MOTION #BD 29/26**Moved by Dave Marsh****Seconded by Marissa Vaughan**

“RESOLVED, THAT Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors receives the report regarding the Flood Emergency Planning Meeting as presented.”

Carried.**PRESENTATION**

Daniel King presented on ABCA staff’s daily planning cycle regarding how they make decisions for flood forecasting. He noted that every day staff record and look at the forecast of precipitation for the watershed area. If significant rain is forecast, then an event based model is run. All of these decisions and modelled events are documented in a standardized format. Staff are working on calibrating the new HEC-HMS model, while still having access to the old model. There are also new technologies to help document flooding events, such as drone photography and videography. Drones are also helpful during an event to take a broad survey of flood-prone areas that are not easily accessible by vehicle. Directors inquired if flood forecasting is a way to examine climate change. Daniel noted, that while it might not be the best lens for climate change, staff have noticed some broader changes to precipitation, such as more precipitation through the winter, and flooding events throughout the year rather than just during typical times, such as the spring freshet.

GENERAL MANAGER’S REPORT

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

MOTION #BD 30/26**Moved by Joey Groot****Seconded by Jaden Hodgins**

“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 31/26**Moved by Wayne Shipley
Seconded by David Marsh**

“RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Friends of the South Huron Trail meeting held on January 26, 2026 and the motions therein be approved as circulated.”

Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) Reference: Flood Emergency Planning Meeting
File: A.5.5
Brief: An email from David Kester (Municipality of Bluewater) to Daniel King, thanking ABCA staff for an informative meeting.

- b) Reference: Commendation
File: A.5.1
Brief: An email from Sarah Kielek-Caster (OMAFRA), commending and congratulating Mari Veliz and her team for the quality of their work in relation to the Farmland Trust.

- c) Reference: Fee Freeze
File: A.5.8
Brief: A letter to all conservation authorities, reinstating a freeze on Planning and Regulations related fees, from March 10, 2026 until February 28, 2027.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Davin Heinbuck provided an update on the consolidation of conservation authorities in Ontario. He noted that in a press release on March 10, 2026, the Honourable Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks announced their decision regarding ERO Posting 025-1257, that after receiving more than 14,000 responses to the initial consolidation announcement (both through the ERO posting or via correspondence), the province has made the decision to consolidate conservation authorities into nine regions, with implementation targeted for early 2027. With this plan, the ABCA would become part of the Lake Huron Conservation Authority Region, along with Maitland Valley CA, Saugeen Valley CA, Grey Sauble CA, Nottawasaga CA and Lake Simcoe Region CA. Davin noted that upper and single tier municipalities will comprise the Regional Boards, and that there will be at least one Watershed Council per region. These watershed councils could be a way to allow for local input. There are still questions about the budgeting process, but Davin expects that we will hear more about this in the coming weeks. He noted that there will also be a transition committee formed for each new region. For now, ABCA staff will continue to operate as usual.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Jaden Hodgins at 4:28 p.m.

Ray Chartrand
Chair

Abigail Gutteridge
Secretary

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

DRAFT

ABCA Program Report

To: Board of Directors
Date: April 16, 2026
From: Davin Heinbuck, General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer
Subject: Regional Consolidation of Conservation Authorities – Update and ERO Decision
Report Type: INFORMATION

Recommendation:

THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Board of Directors receives this update on the province's decision on ERO 025-1257: Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities, as information.

Background

The province announced a decision on March 10, 2026, in respect to the consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities. The decision came following the 45 day posting on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO), from November 7, 2025 to December 22, 2025. This included a review of 5,643 ERO submissions. <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/025-1257>

The decision has been made to consolidate Ontario's 36 conservation authorities (CAs) into 9 regional CAs, up from the previously proposed 7 regional CAs. The implementation of the regional CAs is targeted for early 2027. Guiding principles provided by the province based on recent consultation, include focusing on; retaining local expertise and influence, maintaining watershed-based boundaries and geographic alignment, reduced administrative duplication, and the continuity of services.

A summary presentation of the consolidation plan is provided in the Technical Briefing: Improving Ontario's Conservation Authority System (attached). Additional attachments to this report include a letter dated March 10, 2026, from Minister McCarthy to the Conservation Authority Chairs.

Regional CA

The Lake Huron Region Conservation Authority (LHRCA) will consist of the following predecessor CAs: Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA), Maitland Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA), Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA), Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA), and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA). The Lakehead Region (Thunder Bay) is no longer included in the region.

The proposal sets out that regional Board representation will come from the upper and single tier municipalities. Section 7 of the attached briefing provides some high-level structure that will be refined in legislation and regulations. In total, 69 municipalities will be included in the LHRCA. The table below provides a summary of the member municipalities anticipated to be represented on the LHRCA Board, shown as the upper and single tier municipalities. The total number of municipalities in each of the counties, regions and cities is represented as well.

Summary of watershed member municipalities

Member	# of Municipalities	Member	# of Municipalities
Bruce County	7	Durham Region	3
Dufferin County	5	Peel Region	1
Grey County	10	York Region	7
Huron County	9	City of Barrie	1
Lambton County	2	City of Kawartha Lakes	1
Middlesex County	4	City of Orillia	1
Perth County	4		
Simcoe County	11		
Wellington County	3		

Proposed Conservation Authorities Act Changes

The March 10, 2026, decision notice refers to the province's plan to make amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act. According to the decision, if legislative changes are passed, these changes would:

- Require the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) to:
 - Establish transition committees for each regional CA. Each predecessor CA will appoint one municipally elected official and the CAO/ General Manager.
 - Appoint Project Executives who will chair the transition committees. The Project Executives appointed by OPCA would also serve as inaugural CAO of the regional CA for up to 24 months upon consolidation to ensure stability and continuity in leadership.
- Require transition committees to develop a transition plan to prepare for the consolidation, subject to OPCA's review. Project Executives will be able to request information from conservation authorities as needed to support the development of the transition plan.
- Require the Board of Directors of the new regional CAs to be selected by the participating municipalities prior to the date of consolidation.
- Require new regional CAs to implement the transition plan, with the opportunity to make revisions subject to approval by OPCA, and report on progress of the implementation of the plan to OPCA.
- Suspend existing provisions in the CAA allowing for the establishment, enlargement, amalgamation, and dissolution of CAs during the transition period.
- Enable the Minister to issue immediate temporary restrictions on certain activities by CAs, to facilitate the planned consolidation. The intent is to restrict activities related to extraordinary financial, asset, or employment decisions to mitigate risk and ensure a stable transition to the new regional structure.

- Enable the Minister to issue directions regarding the budget and apportionment process for 2027 CA budgets, to be complete in 2026, with current participating municipalities.
- Update the CA governance structure for regional CAs with participating municipalities being the upper-tier and single-tier municipalities within a CA's area of jurisdiction.
- Set out that the method for determining the number of Board members that each participating municipality appoints to the regional CA would be prescribed in regulation based on population within the regional CA's jurisdiction; each participating municipality would be guaranteed at least one member.
- Set out that regulations would establish the maximum number of members appointed by all participating municipalities of a CA, and the maximum number of members that any one municipality could appoint, to ensure fairness and balance.
- Change governance provisions by removing the requirement that 70 per cent of Board members appointed to the CA by a participating municipality be elected officials.
- Allow for Chair and Vice-chair to be appointed for 2-year terms, and up to a maximum of 8 years served.
- Require that certain knowledge and experience must be considered by municipalities when appointing members to the CA who do not sit on municipal council.

Watershed Councils

Further to the changes highlighted above, legislation would require each regional CA to establish one or more watershed councils to ensure local priorities are identified and considered by the regional CA and create regulation-making authority for the Minister to outline the number, composition, functions, powers, duties, activities and procedures of watershed councils.

These councils need to ensure that local input, knowledge, and service delivery remain in place. As the Board has discussed previously, we should be advocating for 1 Watershed Council per predecessor CA. This piece on local governance is essential and will be central to our discussions going forward as regulations are defined.

Timeline

The following expected timeline has been shared by the province:

- Spring 2026, draft legislation with regards to the Conservation Authorities Act and the consolidation of Ontario's 36 CAs into 9 regional CAs.
- Spring 2026 to early 2027, OPCA oversees gradual and organized consolidation with transition committees, and developing transition plans.
- Early 2027, 9 regional CAs are formed through statutory amalgamation.
- Early 2027 and beyond, regional CAs continue to implement transition plans.

Next Steps

In a time of change, it is paramount that ABCA focuses on maintaining our service excellence, commitment to our community and partners, and providing effective communications as we prepare for upcoming discussions. Over the next few weeks and through transition, ABCA staff will:

- Maintain 'business as usual' and continue with all program and service areas.

- Maintain all partnerships, establish and grow partnerships, and work with our partners and the community to protect, improve, conserve and restore our watershed.
- Work collaboratively with our municipal and CA partners, and the province through the transition period.
- Review future changes and developments announced by the province.
- Maintain communications with regards to the above, to our members.
- Draft legislation released on March 26, 2026 from **Bill 97: Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2026**, specifically Schedule 3, will be shared with ABCA's Board.

While the March 10th announcement was not what we advocated for, we will continue to work constructively with the province, LHRCA predecessor CAs, Conservation Ontario, and our municipal partners.

**Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks**

**Ministère de l'Environnement,
de la Protection de la nature et des
Parcs**



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357-2026-754

March 10, 2026

Dear Chairs:

I am writing to provide an update as we move into the next phase of improving Ontario's conservation authority system. This spring, the government intends to introduce legislative amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* (CAA) that, if passed, would implement this next phase.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the consultation process. We listened closely, and the feedback we received directly shaped and strengthened our plan. Based on the feedback, we adjusted the planned regional boundaries—from the originally proposed boundaries that would have created seven regional conservation authorities—and optimized to boundaries that create nine new regional conservation authorities. These planned boundaries would accommodate areas with distinct geographies and development contexts, better balance differing priorities across rural, urban and northern areas and improve alignment with watersheds and with source protection regions.

We are also building in clear mechanisms to ensure local knowledge continues to guide decision-making. The plan is for the newly created regional CAs to create one or more Watershed Councils to ensure watershed planning is guided by local insights. Regional CAs will continue to operate as independent public bodies with municipally appointed boards that maintain strong local representation and oversight.

The planned consolidation to regional conservation authorities is targeted to occur in early 2027 and is designed to strengthen the system—not weaken it—by increasing consistency, modernizing standards, and providing better tools and resources to support the frontline work your teams deliver every day. Under this plan, regional conservation authorities will continue to rely on the deep local expertise, knowledge, and relationships that your staff bring to their communities. Those who know the watershed best will remain central to delivering local programs and on-the-ground support, helping to ensure decisions reflect the unique environmental priorities of each area.

...2

This plan to transition to regional conservation authorities marks the beginning of a renewed relationship—one that builds on local strengths while establishing greater consistency and shared capacity across the province. As part of this plan, the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) will lead a gradual, carefully managed transition to ensure stability and continuity. Services, programs, and permitting will continue uninterrupted as planning for transition progresses toward early 2027. There will be no cuts to front line jobs. Protecting local service delivery is a guiding principle of this planned transition, and communities will continue to work with the same local teams at conservation authorities they rely on today.

To ensure a smooth and organized transition, the province is providing \$3 million in annual funding, to be administered by OPCA. These resources are planned to be used by OPCA to support conservation authorities throughout the transition period and, in the longer term, will enable regional conservation authorities to achieve program improvements.

Your leadership is vital as we begin this new chapter. I encourage you to share this message with your staff to provide reassurance that their work, expertise, and community relationships remain at the heart of Ontario's conservation system. In the coming weeks, you will be invited to technical briefings to provide further information on the next steps in the planned transition process.

For questions regarding the planned consolidation and the transition process, please contact CCEO@ontario.ca. If you have questions about the planned legislative amendments or day-to-day CA business, please reach out to MECP staff at ca.office@ontario.ca.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment. We look forward to working with you over the next year to make important improvements to Ontario's conservation authority system.

Sincerely,



Todd McCarthy
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

c: Hassaan Basit, Chief Conservation Executive, MECP
Chloe Stuart, Assistant Deputy Minister, Land and Water Division, MECP

TECHNICAL BRIEFING

Improving Ontario's Conservation Authority System



**PROTECT
ONTARIO**

Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

March 10, 2026

Ontario 

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1. Overview: Ontario's conservation authority system

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) administers the *Conservation Authorities Act* (CAA) and is responsible for overseeing Ontario's 36 existing conservation authorities (CAs).

CAs play a vital role in **watershed management** and protecting communities from **natural hazards** like floods. They also deliver programs and services that further the conservation, restoration, and management of natural resources.

CAs issue **permits** to builders, municipalities, and property owners for development activities such as housing developments and installation of sewage systems in areas affected by risks of natural hazards such as floodplains, shorelines, river and stream valleys, and wetlands. Permitting helps to ensure that development does not happen in unsafe areas and that it does not worsen the impacts of flooding or erosion in surrounding areas.

What is a watershed?

A watershed is an area of land that drains all the streams and rainfall into a common outlet, such as a lake, bay or river.

2. The need for action

The Ontario government is taking action to protect Ontario's economy, workers, and communities by making the province the best place in the G7 to invest, create jobs, and do business. To achieve this, the government is making investments to build local infrastructure and taking action to bring more consistency and transparency to the cost and timelines of building homes.

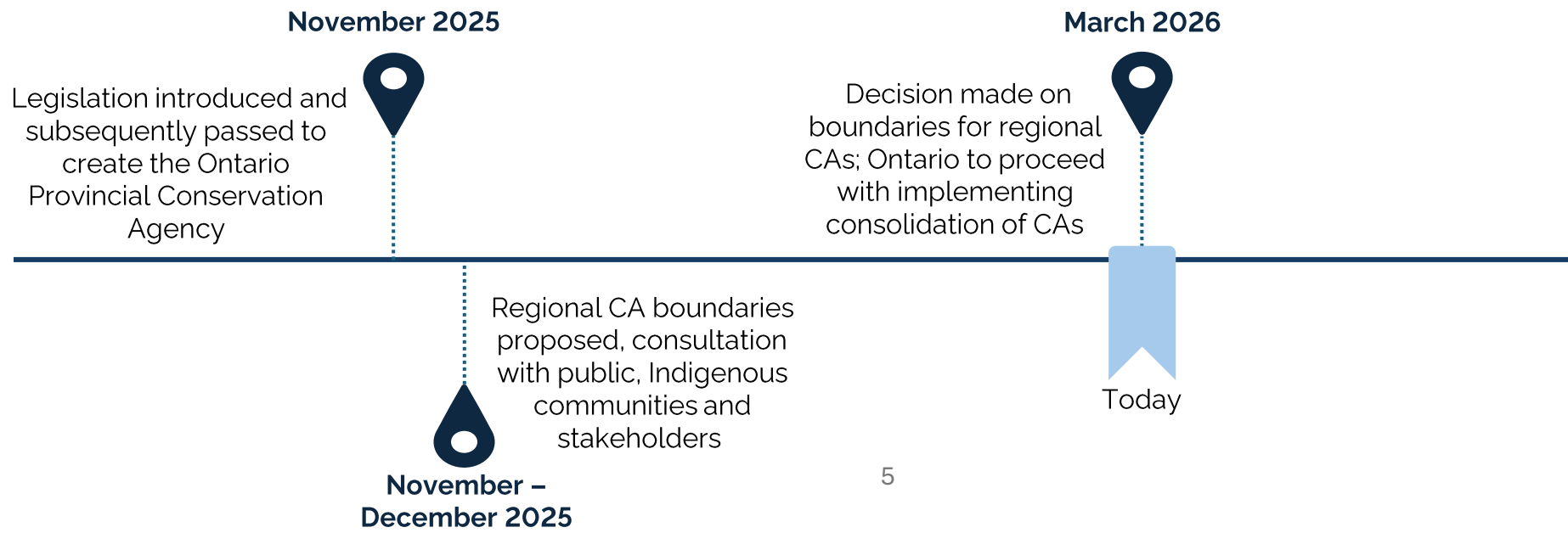
CAs are independent, local public sector organizations with significant variation in capacity, governance, transparency, and reliance on municipal funding. Over time, this has created a fragmented system with inconsistent standards and timelines.

Key challenges under the current framework that this proposal seeks to address include:

- **A patchwork of standards, service delivery:** Each CA has different policies, customer service standards, fees, processes and staffing, and technical capacity leading to unpredictable and inconsistent turnaround times for approvals across all CAs. This can result in uncertainty and delays for builders, landowners, and farmers seeking permits.
- **Outdated and fragmented data systems:** Lack of resources has led to discrepancies in the tools and technology that CAs use, leading to varying types and quality of technology and data management. This can compromise effective provincewide flood risk management and evidence-based decision making.
- **Administrative duplication:** Under the current framework, municipalities are forced to fund duplicate corporate functions (e.g., procurement, communications), diverting costs away from front-line conservation and service delivery.
- **Need for more accountability and transparency:** Lack of transparent asset management and inconsistent performance monitoring and reporting.

2. Actions to date

- Ontario is making progress on its commitment to enhance the effectiveness of conservation authorities, creating more consistency and modern standards and ensuring CAs remain strong, effective and ready to meet today's challenges. Since announcing our plan in fall 2025, we have passed legislation to create the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) to provide centralized leadership and oversight of regional CAs, including coordinating a smooth and organized consolidation and key initiatives to improve the CA system, and we consulted extensively on the proposed regional CA boundaries.
- Consultations included virtual sessions with CAs, municipalities, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities, and regional workshops with CA and municipal leadership led by the Chief Conservation Executive and the Minister. More than 500 people participated, and 14,000+ comments were submitted on the proposed boundaries. We listened and used this feedback to strengthen the plan.
- The government is now moving forward with a framework for the regional consolidation of Ontario's 36 CAs into 9 optimized regional CAs that would deliver more consistent, more efficient, and more cost-effective outcomes for the communities that they serve. In the coming weeks, the government plans to introduce amendments to the CAA that would set out and enable the framework for consolidation of Ontario's CAs.



3. Why consolidation

Under the current system, more than half of all municipalities in areas served by CAs fall within the jurisdiction of two or more CAs, resulting in unnecessary duplication that diverts resources from front line conservation work and service delivery. Individual CAs have significant disparities in size and resources, with some lacking access to the latest tools and technology that support flood risk management and evidence-based decision making.

Consolidation would enable more consistent service delivery and more efficient resource and information sharing, making CAs more responsive to the needs of the communities they serve.

What these changes would mean:

- More resources for front-line services
- Improved flood management and erosion prevention
- Strong environmental protections maintained
- Faster permit approvals
- Modern service delivery
- Consistent standards and use of modern technology

What's not changing:

- Where CAs operate (areas currently served by CAs will continue to be served by CAs)
- The programs and services CAs provide, including the responsibility for source water protection, natural hazard and watershed management
- CA management of their lands and trails, providing access to green spaces, recreation and education programs
- Where and how CAs receive funding
- CA relationships with municipalities, developers, landowners
- Each CA being an independent, municipally-governed organization

4. Guiding principles

- The following principles informed the actions the province is taking to improve CAs, in addition to feedback heard during consultation:
 - **Retain local influence** – ensure local knowledge, expertise and interests inform the watershed management and conservation work of CAs
 - **Maintain CA watershed-based jurisdictions** – align with natural hydrological boundaries to support flood/water management. Align with drinking water source protection regions
 - **Reduce administrative overlap and duplication** – streamline requirements and processes for municipalities and conservation authorities
 - **Strengthen CA capacity** – improve and standardize the level of expertise and resources across CAs. Seek to balance the needs and interests of urban, rural, northern and southern watersheds
 - **Continuity of services** – minimize disruptions to CA operations and staffing, ensuring uninterrupted delivery of key programs such as permits, watershed management and trails and recreation for public use
 - **Improve customer service** – enhance consistency and clarity in process and timelines

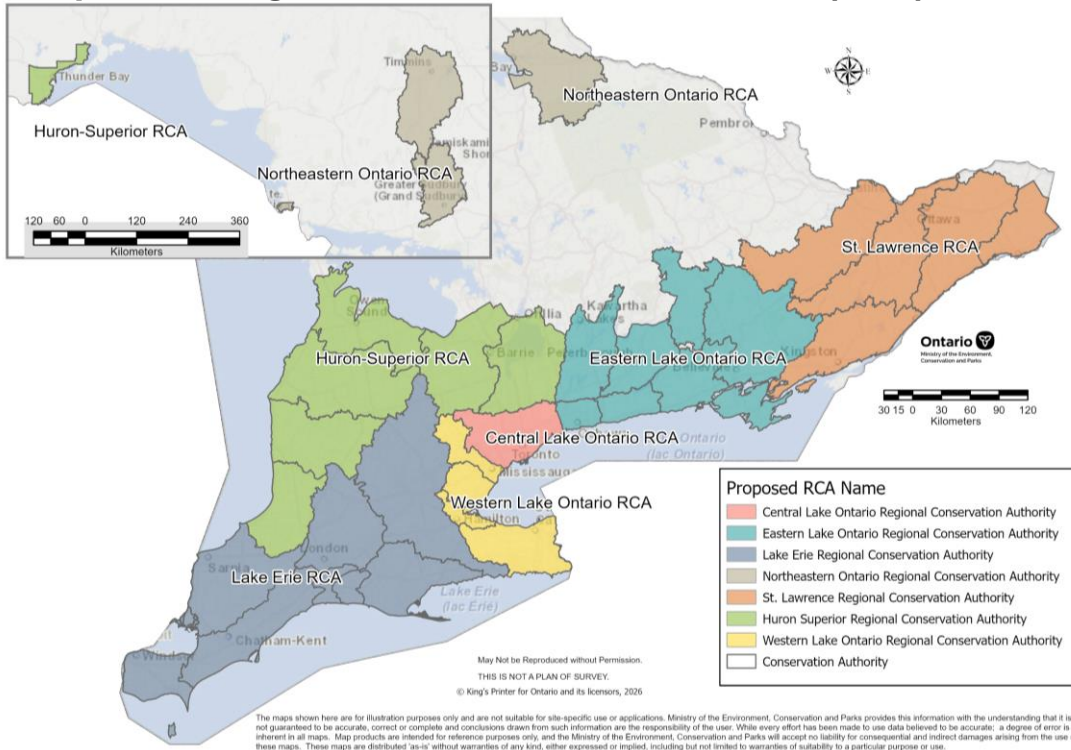
5. Our plan: Improving Ontario's CA system

- The government plans to introduce amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* (CAA) that would set out the consolidation of Ontario's CAs in accordance with the framework described in this presentation.
- The plan is for CA consolidation to take effect early 2027, allowing for transition planning to occur throughout 2026. Over time, OPCA will further transform Ontario's CA system, including by developing a single digital permitting platform to provide a faster, more predictable approvals process and improved customer service
- To support regional CAs throughout the transition, the province is providing annual funding to OPCA in the amount of \$3 million, beginning in 2026. This funding will be used by OPCA to support regional CAs as needed during transition. Post-transition, this annual funding will support OPCA to help regional CAs achieve improvements and program standards set by OPCA.

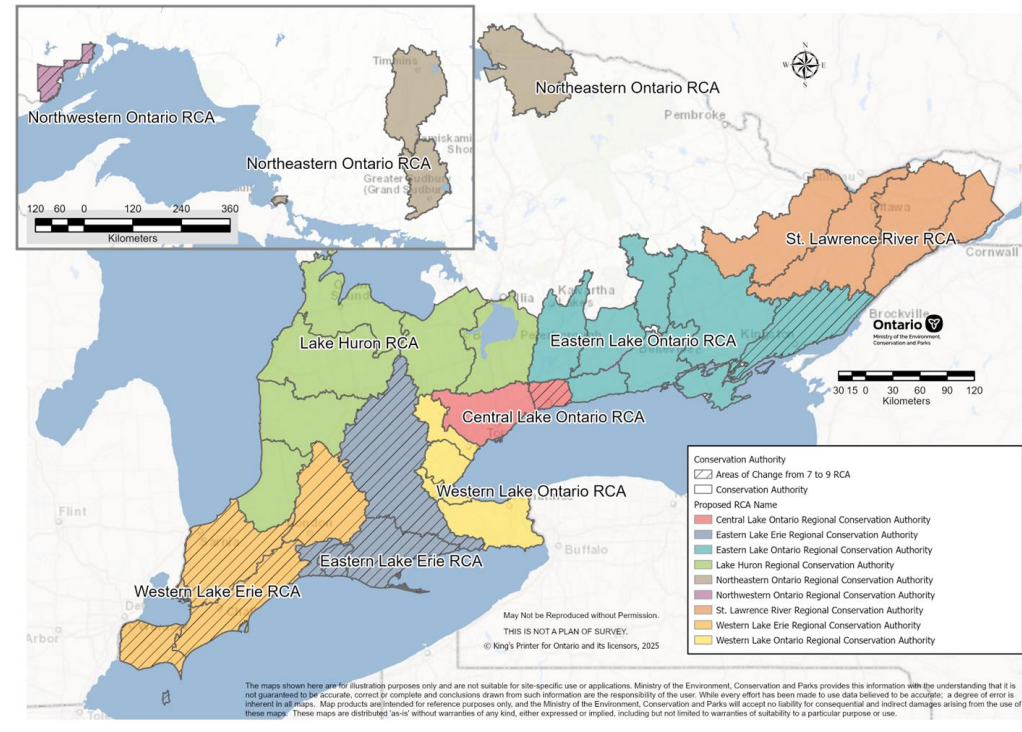
6. Regional CA boundaries

- The regional CA boundaries have been adjusted and refined (from 7 to 9). The feedback received during consultation directly informed the adjustments made to the final regional CA boundaries, which have been optimized to:
 - Accommodate areas with distinct geographies and development contexts
 - Balance differing priorities across rural, urban and northern areas
 - Better align with watersheds and with source protection regions

Proposed 7 Regional Conservation Authorities (RCA)



Final Optimized 9 Regional Conservation Authorities (RCA)



6. Regional CA boundaries: current corresponding CAs

Proposed Regional CAs	List of predecessor (i.e., existing) CAs being consolidated	
Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Lake Ontario CA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toronto and Region CA
Eastern Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catfish Creek CA Grand River CA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kettle Creek CA Long Point Region CA
Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cataraqui Region CA Crowe Valley CA Ganaraska Region CA Kawartha Region CA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Trent RegionCA Otonabee Region CA Quinte Region CA
Lake Huron Regional Conservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ausable Bayfield CA Grey Sauble CA Lake Simcoe Region CA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maitland Valley CA Nottawasaga Valley CA Saugeen Valley CA
Northeastern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mattagami Region CA Nickel District CA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Bay Mattawa CA Sault Ste. Marie Region CA
Northwestern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lakehead Region CA 	
St. Lawrence River Regional Conservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mississippi Valley CA Raisin Region CA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rideau Valley CA South Nation River CA
Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essex Region CA Lower Thames Valley CA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Clair Region CA Upper Thames River CA
Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credit Valley CA Halton Region CA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamilton Region CA Niagara Peninsula CA

7. Regional CA Governance

- Consistent with previous commitments and feedback heard, regional CAs will continue to be municipally governed organizations.
- Under our plan, participating municipalities that are responsible for appointing members (i.e. “the board”) and for paying CA levies would be at the upper-tier (i.e., regional municipalities and counties) and single-tier levels (e.g. cities, towns etc.) This change would mean that lower-tier municipalities (e.g. towns and townships, etc.) within a county would no longer be participating municipalities, as is currently the case where there is a county as the upper-tier municipality.
- Rules for how members are to be selected would be set out in regulation based on each participating municipality's percentage of the population in the regional CA's jurisdiction . Small municipalities are ensured representation by requiring that each participating municipality appoint at least one member. Rules for the number of members may also include:
 - Capping the total number of members on a CA board.
 - Limiting any one municipality's number of members (e.g., to 5) to ensure balanced representation.
- Following the municipal elections on October 26, 2026, newly-elected upper tier municipal councils would select the first members (i.e., “board”) for the new regional CAs prior to the targeted amalgamation date.

7. Regional CA Governance: CAs and municipalities

Regional consolidation of CAs would result in a reduction in the number of municipalities that belong to multiple CAs. This would empower Ontario's CAs in delivering more consistent, more efficient, and more cost-effective outcomes for the communities they serve.

	Current State Regions, single-tier, lower-tier	Consolidated Regions, counties, single-tier	% Change
Number of CAs	36	9	75.0%
Municipalities part of 1 CA	126	57	54.8%
Municipalities part of ≥ 2 CAs	60	16	73.3%
Municipalities part of ≥ 3 CAs	19	4	78.9%
Municipalities part of ≥ 4 CAs	3	1	66.7%
Municipalities part of ≥ 5 CAs	2	0	100%

- Note: Municipalities and associated numbers represent 'participating municipalities' for CAs both in the current state and once consolidated. There is no change in the total number of municipalities that are within a CA's jurisdiction.

7. Regional CA Governance: Watershed Councils

Watershed Councils

- In response to feedback that emphasized the need for regional CAs to continue to rely on the deep local expertise, knowledge, and relationships built, the province plans to mandate that regional CAs create one or more local Watershed Councils to ensure watershed management continues to be informed by local knowledge and input.
- Watershed Councils would assist the CA in identifying local priorities for programs and services to ensure that local interests are considered as part the board's decision-making process.
- Specific requirements for membership composition of Watershed Councils may be set out in regulation (e.g., Indigenous representatives to enable considering Indigenous knowledge, as well as agriculture and development representation to consider other local watershed perspectives),

8. Transition process

Statutory Amalgamation

- With the proposed statutory amalgamation that would create the regional CAs, on the transition date, the former CAs would be amalgamated creating the regional CA ,and legal continuation is provided for:
 - All assets and liabilities of the predecessor CAs
 - All rights and obligations of the predecessor CAs
 - All partnerships, agreements and funding obligations of the predecessor CAs
 - Employees of the predecessor CAs (all rights, duties and liabilities)
 - Permit applications made before the transition date
 - Any hearings underway or hearing requests
- In other words, after the consolidation date, the new Regional CAs would replace the former CAs as legal entities. This approach is intended to avoid disruptions to existing partnerships and agreements with municipalities, Indigenous communities, or others.
- The amalgamation of the predecessor CAs in the new regional CAs would be governed by the *Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act*, which sets out a clear, structured and neutral framework for dealing with labour relations issues following restructuring of public sector organizations (e.g. the need to rationalize bargaining units).



8. Transition process

To ensure service continuity and limit disruptions, and as informed by consultation feedback, under our plan OPCA will coordinate consolidation by establishing a transition committee and providing resources, tools and guidance to support transition efforts for each regional CA being consolidated.

Transition committees

- Transition committees for each regional CA would prepare for the amalgamation of the predecessor CAs into the new regional CA. Each predecessor CA will appoint one municipally elected member and its CAO or GM (or an alternate if they are not available) to the Transition Committee.
- OPCA will appoint a Project Executive to chair each Transition Committee and who would become the inaugural Chief Administrative Officer of the regional CA for up to 24 months.
- Committees would be dissolved following regional consolidation.

Transition plans

- With guidance from OPCA—including a transition playbook with templates and best practices—Transition Committees would develop and implement transition plans to guide each new regional CA through an orderly, step-by-step integration of its predecessor CAs across key functions such as HR, finance, assets, and IT.

8. Transition process

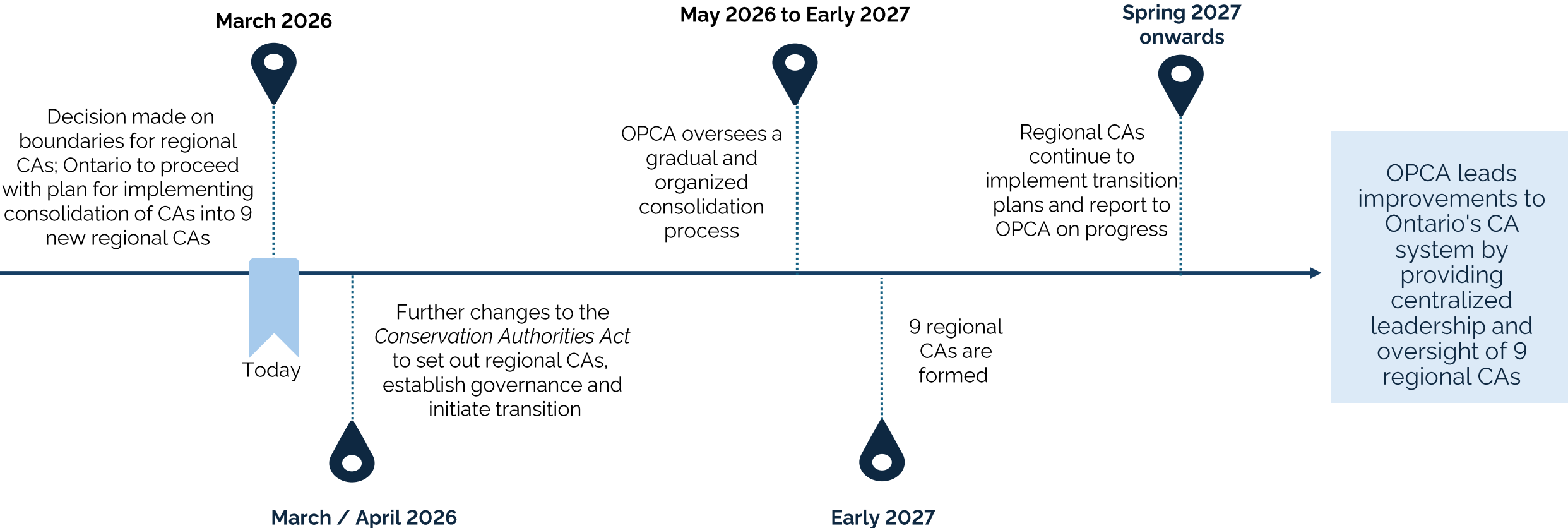
Temporary guardrails

- Our plan includes that temporary guardrails would be applied to extraordinary financial, asset, or employment decisions to mitigate risk and ensure a stable transition to the new regional structure and mitigate risk
- The Minister would be enabled to issue temporary directions to support an orderly CA consolidation. This is not intended to disrupt regular CA business and operations.
- For example, this power could be used to temporarily halt activities such as major land dispositions, significant procurements or material changes to management or organizational structures without review and authorization by the Agency or the Transition Committee.

2027 CA Budgets

- The minister would also be able to issue directions to manage the 2027 budget process for the 36 predecessor CAs, which could be used to provide clarity around timelines (e.g., direct that CA budgeting be completed by December 31, 2026 and levies be issued to the current participating municipalities).

8. Transition process: Timeline



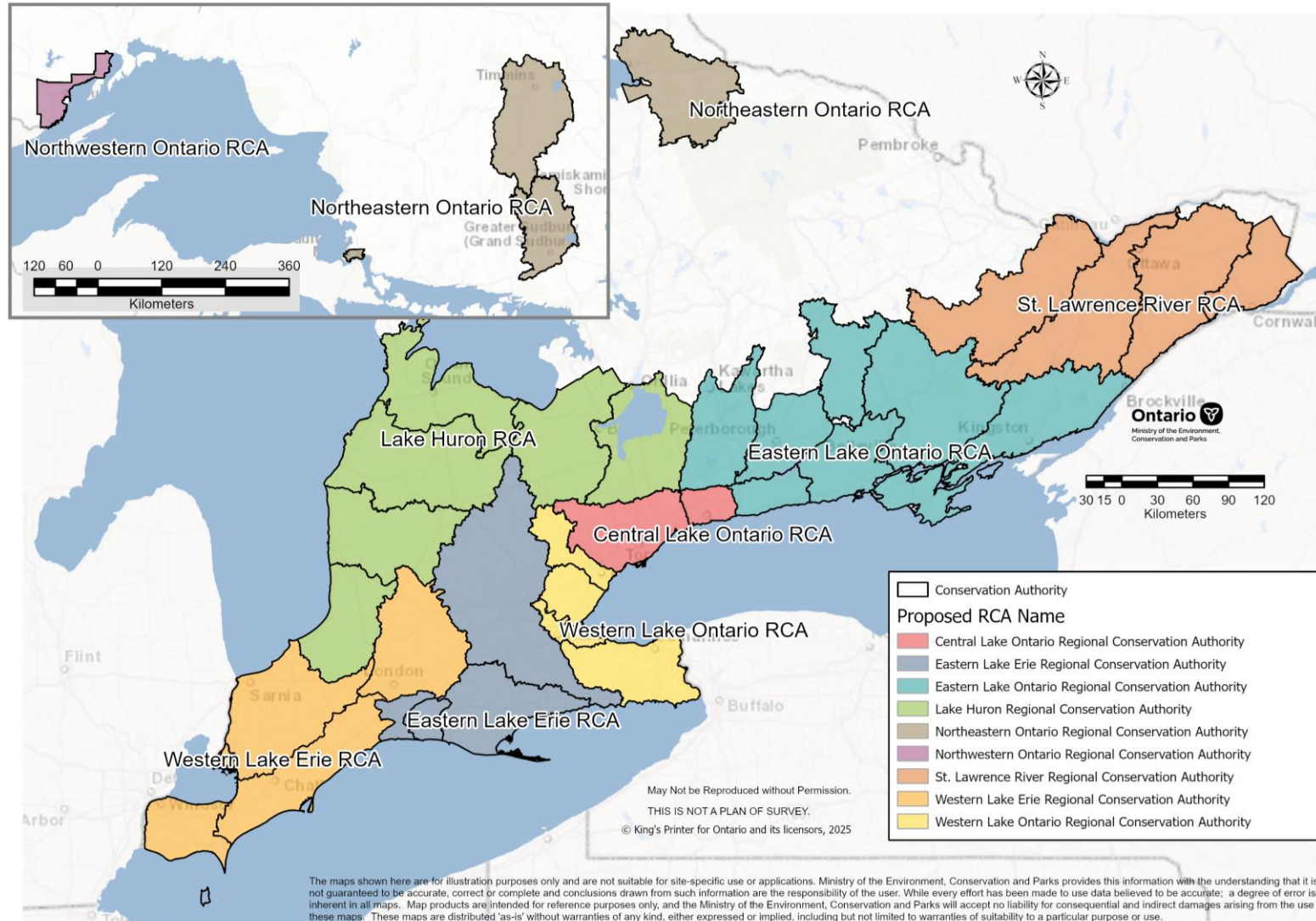
9. Next Steps

- In the coming weeks and months, the provincial government plans to:
 - Propose further amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* (CAA) that, if passed, sets out the provincially led amalgamation of the 36 existing conservation authorities to create 9 regional CAs, including transitional governance and activities to be coordinated by the OPCA .
 - Invite you to technical briefings to provide further information on the next steps in the planned transition process.
 - Engage with CAs, municipalities, Indigenous communities and other interested partners to provide updates about the government's plans and consolidation.
 - Support the OPCA to coordinate transition planning for consolidation to take effect early 2027, with minimal disruptions/interruptions to CAs' services and staffing.
- The Office of the Chief Conservation Executive would lead CA transition activities as OPCA becomes fully operational. For questions regarding the plans for consolidation, please contact CCEO@ontario.ca.
- If you have questions about the planned legislative amendments and day-to-day CA business, please reach out to MECP staff via ca.office@ontario.ca.

10. Summary

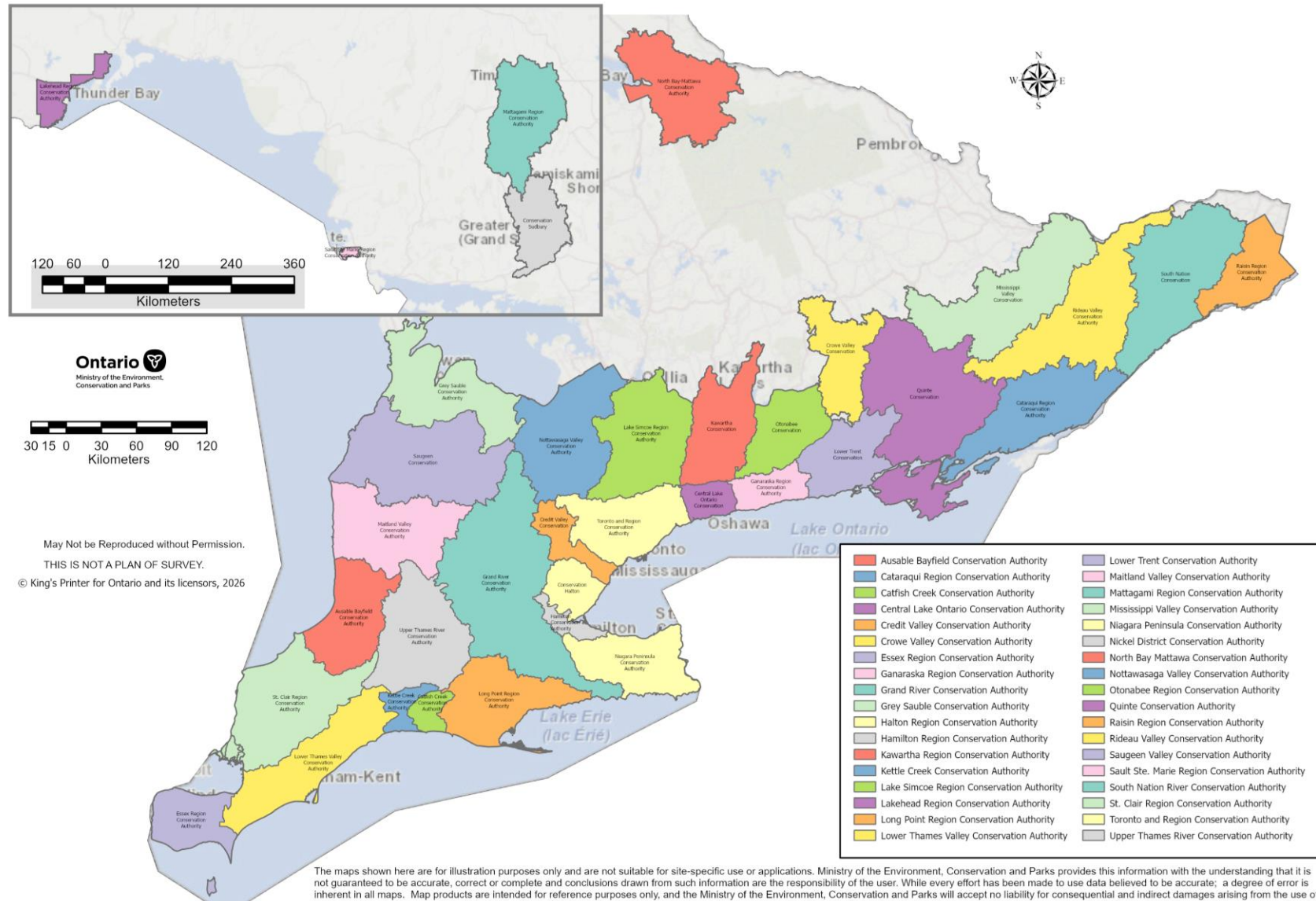
- Ontario's current CA system is fragmented, with inconsistent standards and timelines across 36 individual CAs that can slow down development approvals and risks hampering CAs' abilities to protect their communities from floods and other natural hazards.
- Since announcing our plan in fall 2025, we have consulted extensively. We listened and used this feedback to strengthen our plan, and we are now ready to move forward with plans to introduce amendments to the CAA that would set out and enable the consolidation of Ontario's 36 CAs to create 9 consolidation of Ontario's 36 CAs to create 9 new regional CAs, targeted to take effect in early 2027.
- With centralized leadership and independent oversight of CAs by the new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, Ontario's CA system will provide streamlined, consistent, and improved service delivery without any reduction in environmental standards. These changes will better position CAs to support needed housing and infrastructure projects more efficiently while continuing to protect communities from flooding and other natural hazards, fulfilling provincially mandated programs such as drinking water source protection under the *Clean Water Act*, and managing CA-owned lands and recreational trails so that Ontarians have access to local natural areas and outdoor activities.

Appendix: Boundaries for Ontario's 9 new regional CAs*



*Plan is for this to take effect in early 2027, subject to amendments being proposed to the *Conservation Authorities Act*

Appendix: Ontario's Current 36 CAs



Ontario
Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks

0 30 60 90 120
Kilometers

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ABCA Program Report

To: Board of Directors
Date: April 16, 2026
From: Andrew Bicknell, Manager of Water and Planning
Subject: Applications for Permission
Ontario Regulation 41/24 – Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits

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.

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 #2026-05
NAME: County of Huron
ADDRESS: County Road 84, approximately 0.5km east of Babylon Line
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Hay)
PERMISSION TO: Replace culvert structure 84-09.0
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 4, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 17, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 9
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier
- (2) PERMIT #2026-06
NAME: County of Huron
ADDRESS: County Road 2, approximately 0.1km south of Kirkton Road
MUNICIPALITY: South Huron (Stephen)
PERMISSION TO: Replace culvert structure 02.06.2
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 4, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 17, 2026

- NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 9
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier
- (3) PERMIT #2026-11
NAME: Michael & Susan Klopchic
ADDRESS: 111 Tuyl Street, Bayfield
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Bayfield)
PERMISSION TO: Renovate third story of residence
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 12, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 26, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 7
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier
- (4) PERMIT #2024-35A-R (Renewal)
NAME: Tridem Enterprises Inc. c/o Mike DeMelo
ADDRESS: 71877 Sunview Avenue, Bluewater
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Hay)
PERMISSION TO: Residential structure removal and site restoration work
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 25, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 27, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 2
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier
- (5) PERMIT #2024-35B-R (Renewal)
NAME: Tridem Enterprises Inc. c/o Mike DeMelo
ADDRESS: PT Lot 22 Lake Road West Concession PCL 16
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Hay)
PERMISSION TO: Relocation of house and associated works
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 25, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 27, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 2
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier
- (6) PERMIT #2026-09
NAME: Brett & Roseanne Lavier
ADDRESS: 74231 Homestead Heights, Zurich
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Hay)
PERMISSION TO: For the build of an attached accessory garage and associated work.

COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: February 27, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 13, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 11
STAFF NAME: Millie Ghorbankhani

Minor Permits

- (1) PERMIT #MW2026-17
NAME: Brad Boere
ADDRESS: Paul Bunyan Lakefront Resort – Lot No.70 - 75559 Lidderdale Street, Bayfield
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Stanley)
PERMISSION TO: Replace existing trailer unit and deck
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 20, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 27, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 5
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier
- (2) PERMIT #MW2026-19
NAME: Lighthouse Cove – Linwood Parks Inc.
ADDRESS: 77719 Bluewater Highway, Central Huron
MUNICIPALITY: Central Huron (Goderich)
PERMISSION TO: Construct beach access stairs
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 24, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 27, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 3
STAFF NAME: Jaden Schoelier
- (3) PERMIT #MW2026-12
NAME: Dynamic Septic and Drainage (c/o Devon Webb)
ADDRESS: 74375 Aviator Lane
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Hay)
PERMISSION TO: Install a replacement septic system
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 12, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 13, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 1
STAFF NAME: Ellen Westelaken

- (4) PERMIT #MW2026-14
NAME: Pete & Sue DeBoer
ADDRESS: 10 Harbour Court, Bayfield
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Stanley)
PERMISSION TO: Rebuild an existing deck
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 13, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 23, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 7
STAFF NAME: Millie Ghorbankhani
- (5) PERMIT #MW2026-06
NAME: Holman Built Inc. /Alexander Holman
ADDRESS: 72831 Cantin Court
MUNICIPALITY: Bluewater (Hay)
PERMISSION TO: Build a house and install a septic system
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 10, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 11, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 1
STAFF NAME: Millie Ghorbankhani
- (6) PERMIT #MW2026-13
NAME: Darryl & Karla Button
ADDRESS: 33 Lakeshore Drive
MUNICIPALITY: South Huron (Stephen)
PERMISSION TO: Install a new septic system
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 11, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 17, 2026
NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW: 5
STAFF NAME: Millie Ghorbankhani
- (7) PERMIT #MW2026-15
NAME: Steve Goettler
ADDRESS: 3989 Matilda Street, Dublin
MUNICIPALITY: West Perth (Hibbert)
PERMISSION TO: Install fence
COMPLETED APPLICATION RECEIVED ON DATE: March 12, 2026
PERMISSION GRANTED BY STAFF DATE: March 18, 2026

NUMBER OF BUSINESS DAYS TO REVIEW:

5

STAFF NAME:

Millie Ghorbankhani

ABCA Program Report

To: Board of Directors
Date: April 16, 2025
From: Davin Heinbuck, General Manager/Secretary Treasurer
Subject: Draft Annual Pay Grid Adjustment Policy
Report Type: ACTION

Recommendation:

THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Board of Directors approves the attached policy for ABCA's annual Pay Grid Adjustment; and

THAT, the annual Pay Grid Adjustment Policy be used for budget preparations and approvals effect this date, April 16, 2026.

Background

Each year, as part of the budget preparation process, the proposed Pay Grid is considered and is adjusted to keep pace with the cost of living. The standard practice for determining the proposed Pay Grid adjustment, was tied to an average of what percentage increase our municipal partners were adjusting for their employees, which generally reflected the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

At the November 20, 2025 Board of Directors meeting, staff were directed to prepare a policy that tied ABCA's annual Pay Grid adjustment to the CPI. It was agreed that a three-month average (May-July) was desired, as there can be a great deal of month-to-month fluctuation.

The Board Motion from November 20, 2025 is below:

MOTION #BD 68/25

“RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors directs staff to bring back a policy to the Board that will tie the annual wage increase with a three-month average CPI (May – July).

Please find attached, the draft policy for the Annual ABCA Pay Grid Adjustment.

DRAFT Policy: Annual ABCA Pay Grid Adjustment

Intent:

The Pay Grid Adjustment Policy enables ABCA to proactively and seamlessly approve pay grid increases and help define more accurate budget preparations.

The Pay Grid Adjustment Policy is provided to guide more accurate budgeting and decision making during the annual budget process. Aside from the overall budgets and levies, the ABCA Board of Directors approves annual Pay Grid adjustments as a percentage across all job Levels and Steps.

Adjustments to the pay grid are connected to the cost of living, commonly referred to as the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI is an economic indicator that tracks the change in prices over time. It is calculated and published monthly by Statistics Canada. Inflation is tied very closely to the CPI, and all are commonly, if not accurately, referred to as the 'cost of living'. Monthly published CPI data presents the increase in consumer pricing over the last 12 months. The CPI is subject to variations driven by many factors, and as such, fluctuates from month to month.

Direction:

It is the policy of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority to use the average CPI from the months of the May, June, and July, in the current year (method), to determine the annual cost of living adjustment. The 'cost of living' value, will be that which determines the adjustment of the ABCA's Pay Grid, for the following year. Despite ABCA's method, at no such time would the CPI result in a negative adjustment of the pay grid.

ABCA Program Report

To: Board of Directors
Date: April 16, 2026
From: Nathan Schoelier
Subject: Ausable River Cut Conservation Area Master Plan (2026 – 2036)
Report Type: ACTION REQUIRED

Recommendation:

THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area Master Plan (2026 – 2036).

Background:

Appended to this report is the final draft of the *Ausable River Cut Conservation Area (2026 – 2036)*.

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 Ausable River Cut Conservation Area (ARCA).

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/).



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

Statement of Profit & Loss
January through March, 2026

Accrual Basis

Table 1: Consolidated

	2025 Actual		2026 Annual	
	1st Qtr	1st Qtr	Budget	% of Budget
Revenue				
Grants and Contributions	643,848	824,953	1,377,654	60%
Operating Levy - Category 1	0	0	1,156,423	0%
Operating Levy - Category 1 Projects	0	0	191,461	0%
Operating Levy - Category 3	0	0	168,056	0%
Levy, Capital	0	0	40,095	0%
Levy, Special Benefit	0	0	92,965	0%
Levy, Special Benefit, WECl	0	0	13,896	0%
Rental	25,272	26,171	68,480	38%
Conservation Area User Fees	2,094	2,525	162,600	2%
Sales & Service	384,077	274,077	913,353	30%
Donations	416	2,882	0	100%
Interest	15,986	6,820	78,201	9%
Deferred from Prior Year - Revenue	1,268,133	1,328,622	1,330,460	100%
Deferred to Future Year - Expense	0	0	(728,028)	0%
Total Revenue	2,339,826	2,466,049	4,865,616	51%
Expense				
Purchased Services	79,497	107,074	500,223	21%
Advertising	1,359	2,458	9,388	26%
Memberships, Dues, Licenses	19,064	22,358	65,349	34%
Maintenance and Repair	11,626	20,450	47,198	43%
Property Taxes	12,611	13,586	55,000	25%
Office Operations	34,504	33,381	137,537	24%
Rental	3,664	2,944	13,689	22%
Staff Development	7,350	5,947	40,919	15%
Travel Costs	3,665	2,381	23,034	10%
Utilities	11,997	12,460	45,586	27%
Vehicles and Field Equipment	20,341	10,068	115,184	9%
Program	454,021	449,687	616,882	73%
Board Of Director's	9,041	3,723	25,751	14%
Wages and Benefits	693,670	727,748	3,202,332	23%
Total Operating Expense	1,362,408	1,414,265	4,898,072	29%
Net Operating Income	977,418	1,051,784	(32,456)	-3241%
Other (Income) Expense				
Capital	16,376	35,275	92,760	38%
Amortization	40,264	42,208	160,845	26%
Investment Income - Earned	(49,202)	(27,563)	0	0%
Investment Income - Unearned	135	32,322	0	0%
From Reserve - Revenue	(62,734)	(45,132)	(180,529)	25%
Reserves - Expenses	12,773	4,525	55,313	8%
Total Other Expense	(42,388)	41,635	128,389	32%
Net Income	1,019,806	1,010,150	(160,845)	-628%



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

Statement of Profit & Loss
 January through March, 2026

Accrual Basis

Table 2: Drinking Water Source Protection

	2025 Actual		2026 Annual	
	1st Qtr	1st Qtr	Budget	% of Budget
Revenue				
Grants and Contributions	100,808	103,100	309,299	33%
Interest	815	726	3,887	19%
Deferred from Prior Year - Revenue	34,721	99,418	89,933	111%
Deferred to Future Year - Expenses	0	0	(86,861)	0%
Total Revenue	136,344	203,244	316,258	64%
Expense				
Purchased Services	9,451	5,047	26,382	19%
Advertising	0	0	820	0%
Memberships, Dues, Licenses	30	78	435	18%
Office Operations	6,445	3,566	21,313	17%
Rental	1,968	1,729	7,583	23%
Staff Development	51	0	666	0%
Travel Costs	0	0	3,075	0%
Utilities	345	345	1,415	24%
Vehicles and Field Equipment	355	0	1,228	0%
Program	0	0	513	0%
Board Of Director's	714	0	13,018	0%
Wages and Benefits	42,046	41,516	239,810	17%
Total Operating Expense	61,405	52,281	316,258	17%
Net Operating Income	74,939	150,962	0	100%
Other (Income) Expense				
From Reserves	0	0	0	100%
Reserves	0	0	0	100%
Total Other Expense	0	0	0	100%
Net Income	74,939	150,962	0	100%



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

Statement of Profit & Loss
January through March, 2026

Accrual Basis

Table 3: ABCA Excluding DWSP

	2025 Actual		2026 Annual	
	1st Qtr	1st Qtr	Budget	% of Budget
Revenue				
Grants and Contributions	543,039	721,853	1,068,355	68%
Operating Levy - Category 1	0	0	1,156,423	0%
Operating Levy - Category 1 Projects	0	0	191,461	0%
Operating Levy - Category 3	0	0	168,056	0%
Levy, Capital	0	0	40,095	0%
Levy, Special Benefit	0	0	92,965	0%
Levy, Special Benefit, WECl	0	0	13,896	0%
Rental	25,272	26,171	68,480	38%
Conservation Area User Fees	2,094	2,525	162,600	2%
Sales & Service	384,077	274,077	913,353	30%
Donations	416	2,882	0	100%
Interest	15,170	6,094	74,314	8%
Deferred from Prior Year - Revenue	1,233,413	1,229,204	1,240,527	99%
Deferred to Future Year - Expense	0	0	(641,167)	0%
Total Revenue	2,203,481	2,262,806	4,549,358	50%
Expense				
Purchased Services	70,047	102,027	473,841	22%
Advertising	1,359	2,458	8,568	29%
Bad Debts	0	0	0	100%
Memberships, Dues, Licenses	19,034	22,280	64,914	34%
Maintenance and Repair	11,626	20,450	47,198	43%
Property Taxes	12,611	13,586	55,000	25%
Office Operations	28,059	29,815	116,224	26%
Rental	1,695	1,215	6,106	20%
Staff Development	7,299	5,947	40,253	15%
Travel Costs	3,665	2,381	19,959	12%
Utilities	11,652	12,115	44,171	27%
Vehicles and Field Equipment	19,985	10,068	113,956	9%
Program	454,021	449,687	616,369	73%
Board Of Director's	8,327	3,723	12,733	29%
Wages and Benefits	651,623	686,232	2,962,522	23%
Total Operating Expense	1,301,003	1,361,984	4,581,814	30%
Net Operating Income	902,479	900,822	(32,456)	-2776%
Other (Income) Expense				
Capital	16,376	35,275	92,760	38%
Amortization	40,264	42,208	160,845	26%
Investment Income - Earned	(49,202)	(27,563)	0	0%
Investment Income - Unearned	135	32,322	0	0%
From Reserve	(62,734)	(45,132)	(180,529)	25%
Reserves	12,773	4,525	55,313	8%
Total Other Expense	(42,388)	41,635	128,389	32%
Net Income	944,867	859,187	(160,845)	-534%

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority
Source Protection Authority Meeting

Thursday, April 16, 2026

11:45 a.m.

Administration Centre Boardroom
Morrison Dam Conservation Area

Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Adoption of Agenda for April 16, 2026
3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest
4. Adoption of Minutes from February 19, 2026
5. Business Out of the Minutes
6. Program Reports – Donna Clarkson
 - Program Update – for Information
 - Annual Progress Report on Implementation of Source Protection Plans – for Approval
7. New Business
8. Adjournment

DRINKING WATER
SOURCE PROTECTION

Our Actions Matter

Ausable Bayfield
Maitland Valley
Source Protection Region

SOURCE PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Thursday February 19, 2026

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

DIRECTORS PRESENT

Ray Chartrand, Adrian Cornelissen, Joey Groot, Jaden Hodgins, Dave Jewitt, Dave Marsh, Wayne Shipley, Marissa Vaughan

DIRECTORS ABSENT

Steve Herold

STAFF PRESENT

Donna Clarkson, Abbie Gutteridge, Davin Heinbuck, Ellen Westelaken

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ray Chartrand called the meeting to order at 12:27 p.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION #SPA 01/26

**Moved by Wayne Shipley
Seconded by Adrian Cornelissen**

“RESOLVED, THAT the agenda for the February 19, 2026 Source Protection Authority meeting be approved.”

Carried.

DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

None

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOTION #SPA 02/26

**Moved by Dave Jewitt
Seconded by Joey Groot**

“RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Source Protection Authority meeting held on April 17, 2025 and the motions therein be approved.”

Carried.

BUSINESS OUT OF THE MINUTES

None

PROGRAM UPDATE

Donna Clarkson, Drinking Water Source Protection (DWSP) Program Co-Supervisor, provided a brief program update. She noted that the program has been fairly quiet as there are currently no amendments underway, and the Source Protection Committee is at full member complement. The ABMV SP Region is waiting on the appointment of a Chair for the SPC, as the term for our SPC Chair, Matt Pearson, expired in August 2025.

Donna reported that we are currently in year two of our three-year workplan and budget, which will cover until March 2027. In January 2026, staff submitted the fifth Interim Report for the DWSP program to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), noting that workplan tasks and expenditures are generally on track. Timelines for completing planned amendments to source protection plans are delayed, as municipalities have not yet completed the technical work needed to identify changes to the wellhead protection areas. However, there are several potential upcoming amendments including the Harriston and Palmerston drinking water systems in the Town of Minto (both of which have had an additional well drilled.) The Atwood drinking water system in the Municipality of North Perth is currently undertaking a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment to determine if an additional water supply is needed for Atwood. This may require a new wellhead protection area, depending on the outcome of the study. Finally, the Dundass well in the Municipality of Central Huron, which currently only serves five homes, may be increased in capacity to serve approximately 20 homes. If this expansion goes ahead, then a new wellhead protection area will need to be delineated and included in the Ausable Bayfield Source Protection Plan.

Donna noted that education continues, with Tim Cumming, ABCA Communications Coordinator, providing municipalities with a proposed 2025 – 2027 public information campaign for drinking water source protection. Eight municipalities have used these social media campaign materials. Additionally, the ABMV SP Region continues to participate in #waterwednesday social media campaigns developed by Conservation Ontario.

Finally, staff have been reviewing the changes that were made to the Ontario *Clean Water Act, 2006*, on November 3, 2025, as part of Bill 56, the *Building a More Competitive Economy Act, 2025*. There are several changes, that should help to make some processes more efficient, including allowing source protection authorities to approve some source protection plan

amendments, providing timelines for Minister approvals, and the possibility of turning on new wells without waiting for source protection plan amendments (in some cases).

MOTION #SPA 03/26

Moved by Jaden Hodgins

Seconded by Marissa Vaughan

“RESOLVED, the Ausable Bayfield Source Protection Authority receives the Drinking Water Source Protection program update for information, as presented.”

Carried.

NEW BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Marissa Vaughan adjourned the meeting at 12:32 p.m.

Ray Chartrand
Chair

Abigail Gutteridge
Secretary

To: Ausable Bayfield Source Protection Authority (AB SPA)
Date: April 16, 2026
From: Donna Clarkson, DWSP Co-Supervisor
Subject: Program Update – Drinking Water Source Protection (DWSP)

Purpose: For Information

A. Source Protection Committee (SPC)

The term for our SPC Chair, Matt Pearson, expired in August 2025. The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) has not yet re-appointed this position. All other positions on our SPC are filled. SPC members have voted Dave Frayne to be their acting chair.

The Source Protection Committee met on March 25th, 2026, in Clinton. The agenda included the following items:

- Program update: DWSP workplan; SPC Chair; Education and Outreach; CA consolidation
- Report on November 2025 changes to the *Clean Water Act, 2006*
- Annual Progress Report on implementation of the Source Protection Plans
- Presentation by SPC member, Joy Rutherford: *Water and Rocks – Hydrogeology 101*
- SPC member roundtable

B. Drinking Water Source Protection (DWSP) workplan progress

We are in year two of our three-year DWSP workplan, which covers April 2024 to March 2027. The fifth interim report on workplan progress was submitted to the province in January; MECP approved the report in March. The next interim report is due May 29th 2026, as per MECP requirements.

Workplan tasks and expenditures are generally on track. The timelines for completing planned amendments to the source protection plans are delayed, as the municipalities have not yet completed the technical work to identify changes to the wellhead protection areas.

Future Source Protection Plan updates (no changes since the February report to the SPA board):

- Harriston and Palmerston drinking water systems in the Town of Minto; MVCA:

An additional well has been drilled for both systems. Minto has hired a consultant to complete the groundwater modelling required to update the wellhead protection areas. The timeline for completion of this technical work is October, 2026. Staff will then begin the process of updating the Maitland Valley Source Protection Plan to incorporate the revised wellhead protection areas.

- Atwood drinking water system in the Municipality of North Perth; MVCA: North Perth is currently undertaking a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) to determine if additional water supply for Atwood is needed. Depending on the outcome, a new well may be required; if so, the wellhead protection area would need to be updated via amendment to the Maitland Valley Source Protection Plan.
- Dundass well in the Municipality of Central Huron; ABCA: This system is not included in the source protection plan, as the well currently serves a maximum of five residences. Central Huron is considering an expansion to the system to increase capacity for approximately 20 homes. If this expansion goes ahead, a wellhead protection area will have to be delineated and included in the Ausable Bayfield Source Protection Plan. Timelines are yet to be determined.

C. Conservation Authorities Act – Conservation Authority (CA) Consolidation

The province intends to consolidate Ontario's 36 CAs into nine Regional CAs, with the implementation of Regional CAs targeted for early 2027. ABCA and MVCA would be part of the Lake Huron Regional CA, alongside the Saugeen Valley, Grey Sauble, Nottawasaga Valley and Lake Simcoe CAs.

Impact on Drinking Water Source Protection program

The province has indicated that CAs will continue in their source protection role, but there are many questions to be answered as this transition is made. For example, how will the source protection authority (SPA) and the source protection region (SPR) be defined in future. The governance of DWSP is defined in the *Clean Water Act*, 2006 and its regulations, with reference to current CA boundaries:

- Source Protection Area - defined as the area over which a CA has jurisdiction
- Source Protection Region– defined in CWA and its regulations; e.g. our Region is Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley (ABMV)
- Source Protection Committee (SPC) – defined in O. Reg 288/07

Based on the information provided by the Province of Ontario, it is too early to anticipate the exact impact these changes to the CA Act may have on the drinking water source protection program. However, possible options for MECP include the following:

1. Maintain existing Source Protection Region (ABMV) and SPC:
 - this will require changes to the *Clean Water Act*
 - this option aligns with Justice O'Connor's Walkerton Inquiry report, which recommended watershed-based DWSP planning at the local level

2. Align the Source Protection Region boundaries with the new regional CA. This will require extensive changes in addition to the *Clean Water Act*, including:

- revisions to existing local source protection plans & assessment reports
- governance (i.e., local Source Protection Authorities and Committees)
- digital infrastructure; data ownership; website
- agreements

To: Ausable Bayfield Source Protection Authority (AB SPA)
 From: Donna Clarkson, DWSP Co-Supervisor
 Date: April 16, 2026
 Subject: Annual Progress Report on Implementation of Source Protection Plans in 2025

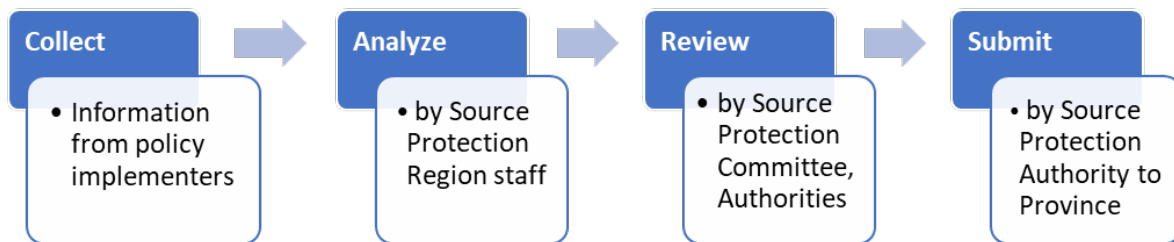
Purpose: For Approval

To report on implementation of the Source Protection Plans (SPP) and to obtain approval to submit the ninth Annual Progress Report for the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley (ABMV) Source Protection Region, to MECP. **See attached 2025 Annual Progress Report.**

A. Background

The requirement for annual progress reporting is established in the *Clean Water Act, 2006 (CWA)*. Source Protection Authorities (SPA) are required to provide annual reports to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) in accordance with the Act. Collectively, the information generated provides valuable information about the implementation of source protection plans (SPP) and the overall success of the program.

Figure 1 provides a simplified overview of the process



The province provides an online reporting interface and templates to facilitate the reporting requirements. The data is collected from the monitoring reports that are submitted to DWSP staff annually by implementing bodies. The monitoring reports provide the Source Protection Committee and Source Protection Authorities with data to gauge the effectiveness of the policies and implementation progress.

B. Key Findings:

Information gathered from the monitoring reports has been summarized below, to provide an overview of the progress made toward SPP implementation in 2025. Note that the Ausable

Bayfield and Maitland Valley Source Protection Plans were updated in 2024, resulting in new and revised policies to be implemented, plus additional drinking water threats to be addressed.

i. Risk Management Officials – Implementing Clean Water Act (CWA), Part IV Policies

Risk Management Officials and Inspectors (**RMO / RMI**) are responsible for implementing the policies that prohibit or manage activities identified as significant drinking water threats (SDWTs). In the ABMV Source Protection Region (**SPR**), the Town of Minto delivers risk management services themselves. Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (**ABCA**) provides this service for the other eight municipalities that have wellhead protection areas in the ABMV Region.

Table 1: Summary of Risk Management Official (**RMO**) Reporting

Reportables	Minto RMO – 2025	ABCA RMO – 2025	Tally – 2015 to 2025
# of RMPs * (new threat activity)	0	1	129
# of RMPs in effect	14	48**	
# s59 Notices for building & development reviews	0	31	693
# Inspections – for RMPs	3	27	391
# Inspection – for prohibition	6	7	155
# Orders	0	0	1

* RMP – Risk Management Plan

** Note that some RMPs address two threats, e.g. fertilizer and pesticide application

Of 129 risk management plans (**RMPs**) established to date, 62 remain in effect. Numerous RMPs have been replaced over time due to new ownership. Others are no longer required, as the activity no longer exists (e.g. owner removed the fuel tank). Additionally, several RMPs for chemicals were rescinded in 2025, as the operation no longer meets the criteria for a significant threat per 2021 provincial Technical Rules.

Following approval of the amended Source Protection Plans in March 2024, RMO’s commenced risk assessments to identify activities that may require a RMP per the updated SPPs. This includes properties in new wellhead protection areas, plus activities that are now considered significant threats per the updated provincial Technical Rules (e.g. road salt). Their progress is reflected in Table 2 below, which enumerates the number of significant drinking water threats.

ii. Education and Outreach Policies

SPP policies include requirements for outreach to promote source water protection and provide information to landowners and member municipalities.

Summary of Education & Outreach work in 2025:

a. Issued two news releases and three source protection e-newsletters

(<https://www.sourcewaterinfo.on.ca/news/newsletter/>).

- b. Released three municipal newsletters, as a PDF directly to municipalities in ABMV Region
- c. Website: The local drinking water source protection website (sourcewaterinfo.on.ca) had almost 9,000 page views in 2025. Top pages included Maps; Source Protection Plans; Drinking Water Protection Zone signs.
- d. From 2020 to 2023, the ABMV region created a series of 12 public information videos, featuring source protection committee members, about drinking water source protection. In 2025, the ABMV region repurposed six of these videos as short, one-minute video reels to help us reach new audiences. The six repurposed videos received almost 10,500 video views on five social media platforms. The videos can be found at <https://www.sourcewaterinfo.on.ca/news/videos/> or on the Ausable Bayfield YouTube channel here: [YouTube](#)
- e. Another important focus of our 2025 communications and education efforts was promoting the Conservation Ontario video '*25 Years of Source Protection in Ontario*', which commemorated 25 years since the water contamination in Walkerton, Ontario.
- f. New in 2025 – Support for Municipalities as implementing bodies for new education Policy 0.11.7: To assist municipalities in educating the public, the ABMV region produced social media resources for municipalities to use. Participating municipalities include Bluewater; Central Huron; Town of Goderich; Lucan Biddulph; Morris-Turnberry; Perth County; South Huron; West Perth. The posts received 11,000+ views.
- g. Social Media – Posts and Photos: ABMV Source Protection Region produced numerous social media posts in 2025 in addition to the municipal campaign. This includes posts for the Dublin Water Wise event plus campaigns such as smart salting and *#WaterWednesday*, developed by Conservation Ontario. There were almost 10,000 views of these posts.
- h. Events in 2025:
 - drinking water source protection (DWSP) staff at ABCA supported a local service group with their 'Water Wise' event
 - In September 2025, SPC member Joy Rutherford and DWSP staff set up a display and activities at the Elementary School Fair in Belgrave
 - Minto DWSP staff attended the Children's Groundwater Festival and a summer camp in the Town of Minto

iii. Municipal Reporting

Source Protection Authority staff collect policy implementation status from municipalities with drinking water systems. The following is a summary of the information submitted by municipalities:

- Official Plan updates: Twelve municipalities/counties in the ABMV source protection region are required to update their Official Plans and Zoning Bylaws to ensure they conform to the local source protection plans. Eleven are complete; Bruce County OP is

undergoing consultation. Zoning bylaw updates to include SPPs are complete for all applicable municipalities except for North Perth.

- Mandatory On-Site Sewage System Maintenance Inspection Program: Septic systems inspection must be conducted every five years for systems located close to municipal wells, in zones A and B of the wellhead protection areas where the vulnerability is high (vulnerability score of 10). Across the ABMV source protection region, 208 on-site septic systems require the five-year inspection. In 2025, 83 septics were inspected; 14 were not completed and will be inspected in 2026.
- New Policy for Salt Management Plan (SMP): Municipalities must create a salt management plan for wellhead protection areas where salt application is a significant drinking water threat. In 2025, Huron East updated their SMP to comply with this new policy, and other municipalities reported that their SMP is in progress.

iv. Provincial Implementation: Prescribed Instrument Policies in the Source Protection Plans (SPP)

Prescribed Instrument policies in the SPPs use provincially issued documents to address potential significant drinking water threats (e.g., Environmental Compliance Approvals for sewage and hazardous waste; Aggregate Licenses; Nutrient Management Strategies, etc.). Provincial ministries screen these approvals and permits to ensure that any activities that pose a significant drinking water threat are identified, and that decisions conform to the SPP policies. In 2025, five new applications for hauled sewage in vulnerable areas were reviewed and determined not to be significant threats.

v. Progress: Addressing Significant Drinking Water Threats

The table below shows progress made from 2015 to 2025, to verify and address significant drinking water threats (**SDWT**) in the ABMV Source Protection Region.

Table 2: Tally of Significant Drinking Water Threats (SDWT)

Threat Type	*A. Estimated Threat # (2024)	B. # threats added	C. # threats removed	D. # threats addressed	E. # threats remaining
Hazardous Waste	7	0	3	2	2
Sewage	227	1	6	222	0
Application of agricultural source material (ASM) (manure)	9	0	0	8	1
Storage of ASM (manure)	0	0	0	0	0
Non-agricultural source material (NASM)	0	0	0	0	0
Application of fertilizer	4	0	0	3	1
Storage of commercial fertilizer	0	0	0	0	0

Threat Type	*A. Estimated Threat # (2024)	B. # threats added	C. # threats removed	D. # threats addressed	E. # threats remaining
Application of pesticide to land	10	0	0	9	1
Storage of pesticide	0	0	0	0	0
Application of road salt	49	0	20	1	28
Storage of road salt	32	0	18	0	14
Storage of snow	28	0	16	0	12
Handling and storage of fuel	28	0	5	17	6
Dense non-aqueous phase liquid	44	0	10	34	0
Organic solvent	0	0	0	0	0
De-icing of aircraft; Pipeline	0	0	0	0	0
Livestock grazing; barnyard	8	0	3	5	0
Water taking from an aquifer	0	0	0	0	0
Total	446	1	81	301	65

*A = Estimate of SDWT engaged in/enumerated when SPP amendment is approved (2024)

B = Additional SDWT identified after SPP approval in 2024, as a result of field verification

C = Threat removed – activity no longer occurring

D = SDWT addressed because policy is implemented (e.g. RMP; septic inspection; prohibition)

E: Remaining number of SDWT to address (as of Dec. 2025)

Percent progress in addressing threats is 86%. Note that salt and snow numbers are expected to drop as Risk Management Officials complete the threat verification process.

C. Annual Progress Report – see attached

The Annual Progress Report format, key reportables and targets are set out by MECP. The report is to be available to the public. As per MECP direction, implementation progress is to be scored according to three possible grades:

P: Progressing Well or **S:** Satisfactory or **L:** Limited progress

Table 3 provides a summary of implementation progress for the ninth Annual Progress Report. For comparison, results of the previous Report are included.

Table 3: Summary of SPP Implementation Progress

Category	8th Annual Progress Report: 2024	9th Annual Progress Report: 2025 (PROPOSED)
Overall score	P: Progressing Well	P: Progressing Well
1. Policy implementation	Progressing Well All policies implemented or in progress; 81% of threats addressed	Progressing Well All policies implemented or in progress; 86% of threats addressed

Category	8th Annual Progress Report: 2024	9th Annual Progress Report: 2025 (PROPOSED)
2. Municipal Progress	Progressing Well; 10 of 12 Official Plans updated	Progressing Well; 1 remaining Official Plan and 1 Zoning Bylaw require update to include SPP
3. Septic inspections	Progressing well; Round 3 of inspections	Progressing well; 83 septic inspected in 2025
4. Risk management plans (RMP)	1 RMP* replaced in 2024; began risk assessments for new WHPAs and threats per updated 2024 SPP	1 new salt RMP in 2025; several RMPs rescinded; Numerous RMPs in progress for salt and fuel
5. Provincial progress	P: Progressing Well; 100% of Prescribed Instrument reviews are complete	P: Progressing Well No change;
6. Source Protection Awareness	Education ongoing; P: Progressing Well	P: Progressing Well; Education ongoing; new social media campaign for municipalities
*RMP: Risk Management Plan WHPA: Wellhead Protection Area SPP: Source Protection Plan		

The Source Protection Committee (SPC) met in March 2026 to review the Annual Progress Report prepared by staff and to add their comments. The SPC approved the report as presented and recommended it be forwarded to the Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley SPAs for their approval and submission to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). As the majority of the source protection plan policies are implemented or in progress, the SPC is confident that the objectives of the Source Protection Plans are “Progressing Well/On Target”.

See attached – 9th Annual Progress Report, to be submitted to MECP, and made publicly available.

Recommendation: That the Ausable Bayfield Source Protection Authority approve the attached Annual Progress Report for submission to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP).

Source Protection Annual Progress Report – 2025

I. Introduction

This annual progress report outlines the progress made in implementing the source protection plans for the Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley source protection areas, as required by the Ontario *Clean Water Act, 2006* and its regulations. This report highlights actions taken to protect the sources of our drinking water: the groundwater aquifers and Lake Huron.

Protecting the sources of our drinking water is the first step in a multi-barrier approach to safeguard the quality and quantity of our water supplies. The source protection plans are the culmination of extensive science-based assessment, research, consultation with the community, and collaboration with local stakeholders and the Province of Ontario.

This is the ninth annual progress report submitted for the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley (ABMV) Source Protection Region. It covers the period of April 2015 to December 31st, 2025, and summarizes progress made in the year 2025.



II. A message from your local Source Protection Committee

P: Progressing Well/On Target – The majority of the source protection plan policies have been implemented and/or are progressing.

April 2025 marked ten years since our source protection plans first took effect. In that time, significant progress has been made to implement the policies contained in the plans, and address the activities that may pose a risk to our sources of municipal drinking water. We look forward to continued progress in the protection of our water sources.

The Committee reviewed the implementation results for the ABMV Source Protection Region, noting the important progress made since the SPPs came into effect. All SPP policies are implemented or in progress. Threats to drinking water are being addressed, and the objectives of the Clean Water Act are being achieved. The Committee feels confident in their assessment that SPP implementation is 'progressing well / on target.'

The Committee would like to acknowledge the ministries, municipalities, and other implementing bodies for their contribution to this report, and for their ongoing efforts to protect drinking water.

In 2025, we marked the commemoration of 25 years since the water contamination events in Walkerton, Ontario, that resulted in the deaths of seven people and more than 2,300 people being seriously ill. We should take a moment to reflect, and to recognize the enhancements to drinking water protection achieved since that time. Continued vigilance in the protection of Ontario's drinking water sources is vital.

III. Our Watershed

To learn more, please read our source protection plans and associated assessment report.

The Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley (ABMV) Source Protection Region (SPR) is made up of the Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley source protection areas (SPAs). The two SPAs overlie the same jurisdiction as the Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley conservation authorities. Their jurisdictions abut and their major rivers flow into Lake Huron. The combined watersheds are approximately 5,690 square kilometres in size, with a combined population of 105,000. There are six counties and 24 lower-tier municipalities entirely or partly within the SPR. The Ausable Bayfield Source Protection Area is adjacent to the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation.

Land uses can have a significant impact on water quality and quantity. Agriculture is the major land use in the region, with small urban areas scattered throughout. Their watersheds share common patterns of landscapes and natural systems. Their towns are small; their economies are based on the economic driver of a thriving agricultural sector, a significant manufacturing sector as well as the additional economic pillars of tourism, heritage and culture. Lake Huron is a major driver of the tourism industry.

In the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Region there are 25 municipal groundwater well systems and two Lake Huron intakes. Approximately half of the population is served by these systems; the remainder receive their water from private or communal wells and intakes. There are two great lake intakes – Lake Huron Primary Water Supply System (in Port Blake, near Grand Bend); and the Goderich Water Supply.

The wellhead protection areas for the municipal well systems are: Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh: Century Heights, Dungannon, Huron Sands; Municipality of Bluewater: Varna; Municipality of Central Huron: Auburn, Benmiller, Clinton, Kelly, McClinchey, SAM, Vandewetering; Municipality of Huron East: Brucefield, Brussels, Seaforth; Township of Huron Kinloss: Lucknow, Whitechurch, Ripley (well system itself is outside ABMV SPR); Town of Minto: Clifford (well system itself is outside ABMV SPR), Harriston, Palmerston; Municipality of Morris-Turnberry: Belgrave; Township of North Huron: Blyth, Wingham; Municipality of North Perth: Atwood, Gowanstown, Listowel, Molesworth.

The source of water for the wells is typically deep bedrock aquifers, which are protected by a thick overburden. There have been no Issue Contributing Areas identified in the SPR. There has been a number of changes to these well systems since approval of the source protection plans in 2015, triggering the need for several amendments to the source protection plans. An amendment under Section 34 of the *Clean Water Act, 2006* (CWA) was approved by the Province in 2019. In 2023, the Zurich groundwater system was removed from the Plan, via a 'Section 51' amendment. In March 2024, an update per section 36 of the CWA was approved, following extensive consultation. In July 2024, an amendment per section 34 of the CWA was approved, incorporating changes to the Century Heights and Lucknow wellhead protection areas.

IV. At a Glance: Progress on Source Protection Plan Implementation

1. Source Protection Plan Policies

The overall progress score on achieving source protection plan objectives in this reporting period is: P: Progressing Well/On Target

All of the legally binding policies that address significant drinking water threats are implemented or in progress. Almost 90% are fully implemented and the remainder are in progress.

All of the policies that address moderate and low drinking water threats are implemented or have been evaluated with no further action required.

More than 80% of policies that are not directly related to drinking water threat activities are implemented, and the remainder have been reviewed and require no further action. Note that these policies are 'non-binding' on implementing bodies.

Approximately 86% of significant threats are addressed. This is an increase from 80% in the previous reporting period. Threats can be addressed through several tools, including risk management plans, septic inspections and prescribed instruments.

Municipal Progress: Addressing Risks on the Ground

P : Progressing Well / On Target

The Region contains almost the full extent of Huron County, plus portions of Bruce, Perth, Wellington, Lambton and Middlesex counties. Nine lower-tier municipalities and four upper-tier municipalities in our source protection region have vulnerable areas where significant drinking water threat policies apply.

All of the municipalities in our source protection region have indicated that they have processes in place to ensure their day-to-day planning decisions conform to our source protection plans.

Twelve municipalities in our source protection region are required to review and amend their Official Plans to ensure they conform to the local source protection plans (SPPs). Eleven of the municipalities (lower and upper tier) have completed the required Official Plan update. The remainder is in progress, and underwent consultation in 2025. Nine municipalities are required to update their Zoning Bylaws to conform to the SPP; eight are complete. It is anticipated that the remaining official plan and zoning bylaw updates will be completed within the next year.

2. Septic Inspections

P: Progressing well / On target.

In areas where an on-site sewage system (septic system) is considered a significant drinking water threat, inspections are required once every five years in accordance with the Ontario Building Code. In the ABMV SPR, the inspections were carried out by municipal staff or by B. M. Ross and Associates Limited (for the Township of Huron-Kinloss). Educational materials were reviewed with the landowner at the time of the initial inspection.

In the ABMV Source Protection Region, 208 on-site sewage systems are subject to the mandatory inspection program. We are now in the third cycle of inspections. In 2025, 83 septics were inspected, with five requiring remedial action. 14 systems were not inspected within the required 5-year timeline. Orders will be issued for compliance where necessary. The inspection results found the majority are functioning as designed and carrying out regular pump-outs

3. Risk Management Plans

P: Progressing Well/On Target

In the 2025 reporting period, one new risk management plan (RMP) was established in our source protection region, and other RMPs were reviewed and rescinded. Since our source protection plans took effect in April 2015, a total of 129 risk management plans have been established, with 62 remaining in effect.

Since our source protection plans took effect in 2015, Risk Management Official/Inspectors have carried out more than 500 inspections for prohibited or regulated activities. In 2025, 43 inspections were conducted. This includes inspections required for risk management plans, to ensure compliance with prohibition and to verify threat activities. To date, there is a 100% compliance rate with the risk management plans established in our source protection region.

4. Provincial Progress: Addressing Risks on the Ground

P : Progressing Well/On Target

The Ontario ministries have reviewed previously issued provincial approvals (e.g., prescribed instruments, such as environmental compliance approvals under the Environmental Protection Act) where they have been identified as a tool in our plans to address activities that pose a significant risk to sources of drinking water. The ministries have identified prescribed instruments that may be subject to significant drinking water threat policies and require further review. The provincial approvals are amended where necessary to conform to source protection plan policies.

No significant threats were identified in 2025 through screening by the provincial ministries.

5. Source Protection Awareness and Change in Behaviour

More than 80 Drinking Water Protection Zone signs have been installed in our source protection region. The signs are installed on roads near municipal water sources to alert citizens that their actions in these zones can have an impact on a municipal drinking water source. The signs are an effective way to raise awareness about protecting our sources of water. Several of the municipalities in this region have included information about the signs and the drinking water source protection program on their websites.

Ongoing efforts are made by source protection authority staff to implement the education and outreach policies in the Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley source protection plans. Education and Outreach tools include a website and active social media presence. Fact sheets were created for specific activities as well as for individual well systems. This focused outreach aims to improve awareness about local sources of water.

Between 2020 and 2023, a series of 10 videos, featuring members of the Source Protection Committee, was created to promote source water protection. To adapt to trends in communications through social media, the ABMV region 'repurposed' and reformatted six of these videos as short (one-minute) video reels.

6. Source Protection Plan Policies: Summary of Delays

Significant progress has been made on implementing all policies related to significant drinking water threats. In 2025, all Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley Source Protection Plan (SPP) policies that directly address significant drinking water threats are implemented or in progress.

Two municipalities encountered delays regarding their Official Plan and zoning bylaw updates, required to conform to the SPPs. However, steady progress has been made.

7. Source Water Quality: Monitoring and Actions

In our source protection region, no issues have been identified in our local science-based assessment reports regarding the quality of the sources of municipal drinking water.

8. Science-based Assessment Reports: Work Plans

No work plans related to water budget, GUDI (groundwater under direct influence) systems or ICA (Issue Contributing Area) were required to be implemented for our assessment report(s).

A comprehensive update to the Source Protection Plans and associated Assessment Reports was completed in March 2024, per section 36 of the Clean Water Act, as directed by the province. In addition, a locally initiated update per section 34 of the Act was approved in July 2024 to incorporate changes to two water supply systems.

9. More from the Watershed

To learn more about our source protection region/area, visit our local website home page: <https://www.sourcewaterinfo.on.ca>

