

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2023

Hamilton Conservation Authority



**Hamilton  
Conservation  
Authority**

A Healthy Watershed for Everyone



## our **Vision** – where we want to be

A healthy watershed for everyone

## our **Mission** – what we do

To lead in the conservation of our watershed and connect people to nature

## our **Commitment & Corporate Values**

- Provide excellent customer service and a solution-oriented approach
- Be accountable, transparent and responsible in the use of resources
- Embrace new technologies to help develop new ways of doing business and foster innovation
- Promote teamwork internally and externally to achieve common goals, support existing relationships and build new partnerships
- Maintain trust, act with integrity and treat others with respect
- Value knowledge to continually learn and improve, in an effort to achieve best solutions



## Message from our CAO and Board

On behalf of the Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA), we are pleased to present our new five-year Strategic Plan, which identifies our priority areas for 2019-2023. It builds on the solid foundation from our previous plan, and moves us forward so we can modernize how we operate, become more innovative and be better positioned to partner with others to respond to new challenges and opportunities.

This plan also responds to comprehensive feedback we received throughout its development. Over the past several months, we reached out for input more broadly than ever before. Consultation went beyond our Board of Directors and staff. It also included key partners and the public through an online survey and three open houses. Throughout the consultations, we heard that what we do is important to the people and communities we serve. We obtained feedback on leading for conservation, adapting to climate change, and ensuring we enhance our internal and external communication. We also heard that people are looking for recreational experiences that are diverse and engaging, yet also sustainable.

While this plan identifies some new challenges and direction, we remain grounded to our roots and founding principles to protect people and property from natural hazards, safeguard and enhance the water and natural places, provide education and engagement with our residents and connect people with nature.

As we move forward over the next five years this plan will provide both a blueprint and a roadmap to build on and enhance all facets of our organization. It guides us, yet provides enough flexibility to meet changing needs. We believe it will have a positive impact both within our organization and across our watershed.

Sincerely,



Lisa Burnside

*CAO, on behalf of the Board*



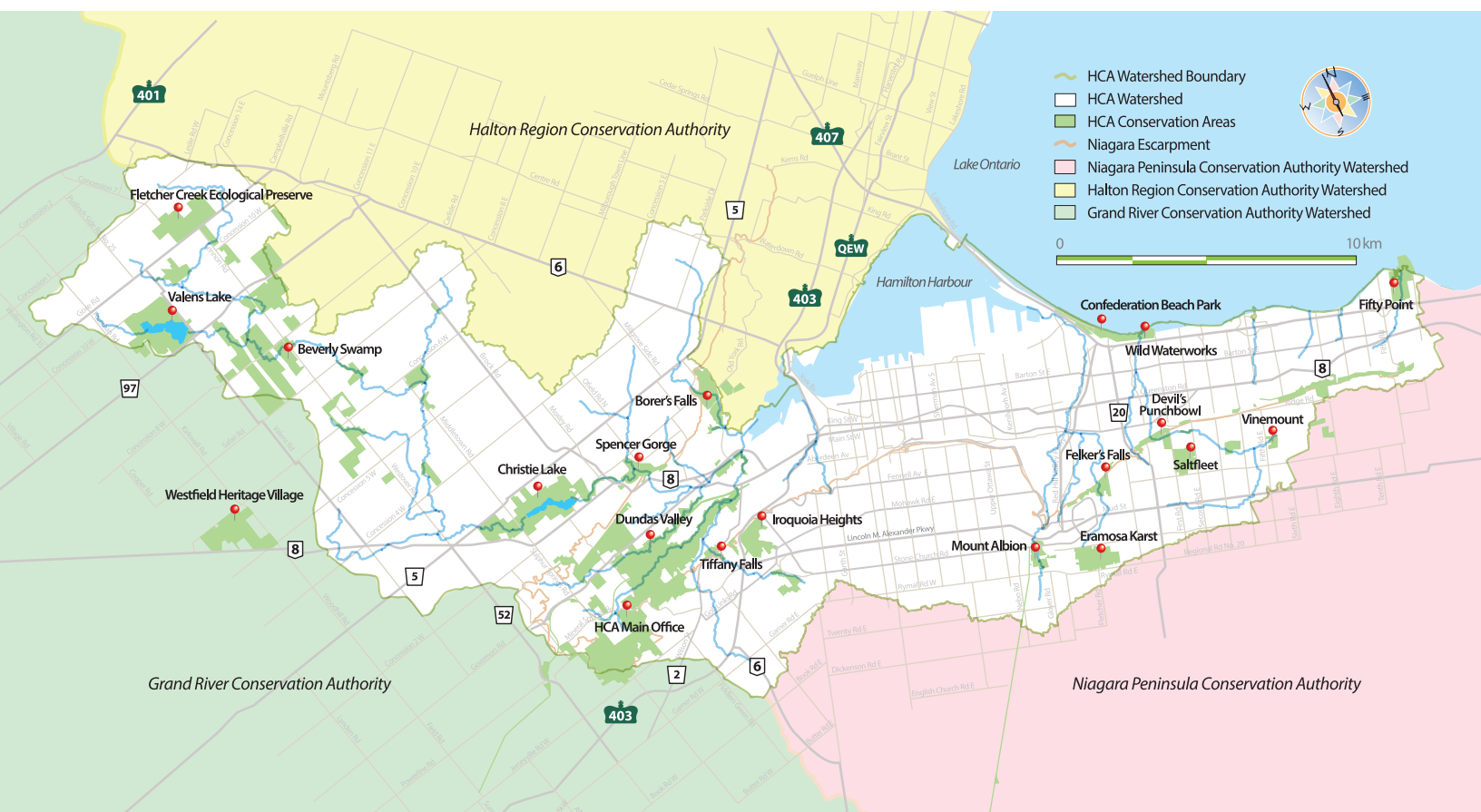
# Our Watershed

Hamilton Conservation Authority's watershed is situated at the western end of Lake Ontario and Hamilton Harbour, and is traversed by the Niagara Escarpment. The watershed is spread across rural and agricultural areas, major urban centres like the City of Hamilton, and a number of smaller villages and hamlets. HCA is also a major land owner within this watershed area. We own or manage 4,484 hectares (11,079 acres) of land which represents 10% of our watershed.

Our watershed is diverse. It contains varied natural landscapes, ecosystems and natural areas, which support a rich biodiversity that provides the foundation for a healthy watershed. HCA also works with diverse community and environmental groups who are active and engaged throughout the watershed and continue to support the development of thriving, resilient and sustainable communities. These are our strengths.

However, our watershed also faces challenges. Urban expansion and development are impacting water resources and natural areas. The watershed is located within the west end of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area, home to over six million people. Population growth throughout the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area is increasing as is demand for access to natural and recreational areas. Climate change and increases in extreme weather will continue to challenge our ability to manage and adapt. Invasive species are an increasing concern in many natural areas in the watershed.

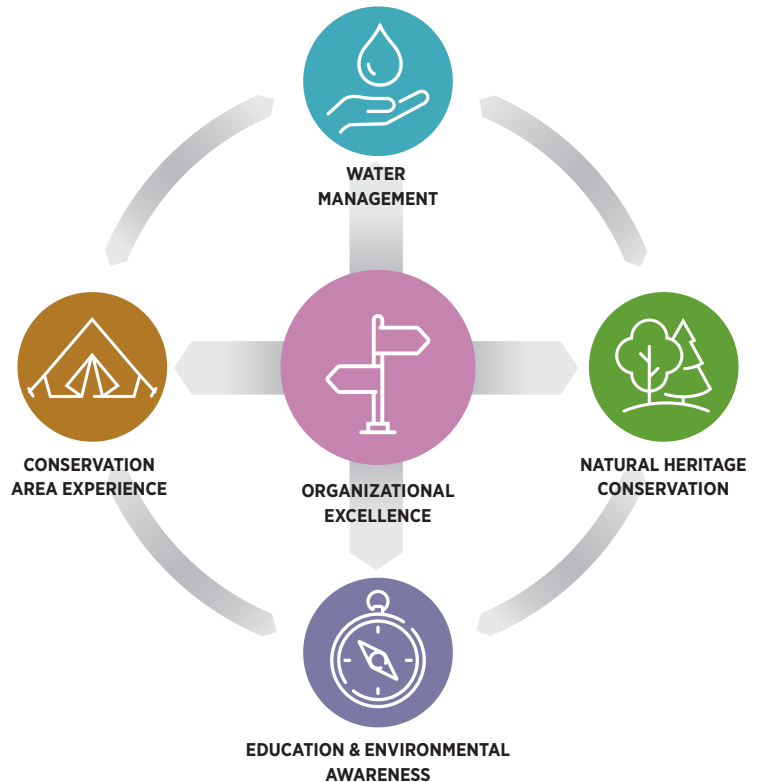
With challenge comes opportunity. This plan identifies broad areas of strategic priority where HCA will focus over the next five years to address challenges, realize opportunities and advance its vision for a healthy watershed.





# Strategic Priority Areas

In consideration of watershed conditions and challenges, and HCA's vision and mission, five areas of strategic priority have been identified, with Organizational Excellence at the centre. These broad areas of priority are interconnected, and will be advanced through the development and implementation of related programs, projects, actions and initiatives in a coordinated manner. The following sections detail the priority areas and associated initiatives for the years 2019 to 2023.





### Interesting HCA Facts:

**2** member municipalities  
(City of Hamilton provides  
99% of levy/Township of  
Puslinch provides 1% of levy)

**11** member Board of  
Directors

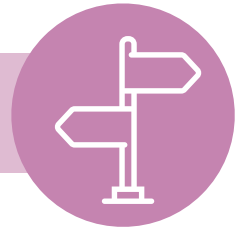
Over **60%** of operating  
revenue is self-generated

**474 km<sup>2</sup>** area of  
land-based jurisdiction  
for our watershed





# Organizational Excellence



Organizational Excellence is focused on ensuring corporate and financial viability and the HCA's relevance in the community.

Examples of such work include:

- Providing a positive and safe environment for both staff and visitors
- Attracting and retaining a skilled workforce and promoting staff training, mentoring and succession planning
- Generating sufficient self-generated revenues to meet expenses
- Promoting and educating about the role and mandate of the HCA and the services we provide to the public

## Initiatives

- › Support a dynamic and resilient culture of learning, safety and engagement through professional development, training and ongoing assessment
- › Communicate both internally and externally about what HCA does and why
- › Continue to pursue new funding relationships and opportunities
- › Support the activities and initiatives of the Hamilton Conservation Foundation
- › Modernize records management and digitize historical records and archives
- › Update our website to increase access to information and services
- › Continue to update and streamline operational policies and leverage emerging technology to enhance business service delivery
- › Support the capital development and major maintenance program to enhance our facilities and ensure they are safe, functional and current
- › Collaborate and share services, expertise and resources with neighbouring conservation authorities and Conservation Ontario
- › Foster strong working relationships with our federal, provincial and municipal partners through regular meetings to discuss issues of mutual interest
- › Identify opportunities to engage the community, adjacent landowners and Indigenous Peoples





### Interesting HCA Facts:

**3** flood control dams

**21** stream flow and precipitation gauges

**17** surface water monitoring stations

**39** flood warning/watches issued 2017/2018

**6** major creek systems:  
Spencer, Red Hill, Stoney  
& Battlefield, Stoney Creek  
numbered watercourses,  
Borer's and Chedoke





# Water Management



Water Management is undertaken to protect the watershed for people, property, flora and fauna, and natural resources through flood and erosion control, water quality programs, low flow augmentation and adaption strategies to adapt to changing climatic conditions.

Examples of such work include:

- Forecasting and issuing flood warnings
- Monitoring water quality
- Developing climate change strategies
- Developing watershed and subwatershed strategies

## Initiatives

- › Complete floodplain mapping update program
- › Complete Lakeshore Management Plan
- › Maintain and enhance our flood control infrastructure to address flooding and work to augment low flow conditions
- › Invest in programs to address the impacts of nutrient and sediment loading on watershed streams, creeks, rivers and receiving water bodies
- › Invest in our monitoring programs and networks to support our ability to track the impacts of climate change and changes in our environment, and inform our adaptation strategies
- › Develop a Communication and Outreach Program to highlight our watershed management program
- › Work with the City of Hamilton, and our partners on the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan to address nutrient and sediment loading within the Hamilton Harbour Watershed
- › Continue the HCA's Watershed Stewardship Program and work with landowners to increase environmental awareness and restoration projects



### Interesting HCA Facts:

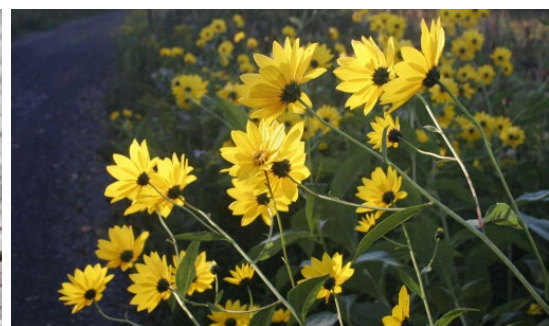
Own and manage  
**4,484** hectares of land,  
representing 10% of our  
watershed

Lands include features  
such as forests, prairie,  
wetlands, watercourses,  
karst, Lake Ontario  
shoreline and the Niagara  
Escarpment

**400** hectares acquired  
since 2013

**12** significant wetland  
complexes

Over **1,000** species of  
plants and animals





# Natural Heritage Conservation



Natural Heritage Conservation is the conservation, restoration and enhancement of watershed natural areas and ecology.

Examples of such work include:

- Acquiring natural area lands
- Monitoring plants, fish and wildlife to assess the health of natural areas
- Implementing stewardship and restoration programs

## Initiatives

- Invest in land acquisition on priorities identified within the Land Securement Strategy
- Identify and undertake restoration projects based on monitoring programs and master plans
- Implement the Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Program and have the first wetland designed and constructed by 2021
- Maintain and enhance the natural heritage features of HCA lands and manage these lands on an environmentally sustainable basis
- Work with our partners on stewardship initiatives for the Hamilton Watershed Stewardship Program and the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System
- Continue and expand the aquatic and terrestrial monitoring programs
- Promote sustainable development by working with the City of Hamilton on natural heritage issues and undertake the HCA plan input and review program
- Work with our partners to maintain and enhance the natural heritage inventory
- Implement the approved Invasive Species Strategy and natural heritage plans as detailed in HCA master plans



### Interesting HCA Facts:

Over **1 million** visitors  
to HCA areas in 2017

**6** major conservation areas

**145 km** of trails  
maintained

**300** campsites

**2** recreational lakes

**340** boat slip marina





# Conservation Area Experience



Conservation Area Experience is the provision of high quality, diverse conservation areas that promote outdoor recreation, health and well-being and strengthen public awareness of the importance of being in or near our conservation areas.

Examples of such work include:

- Connecting communities and residents with nature by encouraging conservation area use
- Maintaining passive and active recreational use such as trails, camping and swimming
- Ensuring conservation area use and development is in accordance with master and management plans
- Promoting the importance of natural areas through our conservation areas and facilities

## Initiatives

- › Update and develop master and management plans, and implement priorities to further enhance conservation areas for current and future generations
- › Develop visitor and parking management strategies to support conservation areas for sustainable recreation, education and tourism
- › Continue to expand installation of automatic gates across our conservation areas
- › Work with partners such as the City of Hamilton, the Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark System, and the Hamilton Burlington Trails Council, to enhance trail networks for recreational uses
- › Identify and undertake approaches to increase sales of annual membership passes
- › Identify and act upon revenue generation/cost reduction and investment in visitor services opportunities in our conservation areas
- › Identify and support a more diverse and accessible range of programs for our conservation area users
- › Review and update policies related to hazard trees, building, bridge and trails inspections and emergency procedures to ensure our conservation areas meet reasonable and best practices for public safety



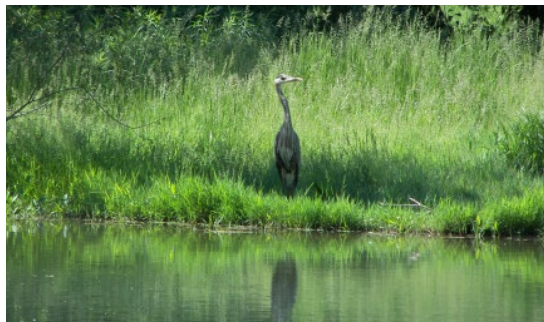


Interesting HCA Facts:

**20,000+** students annually for outdoor and cultural heritage education

Over **4,700** volunteer hours contributed towards projects

**140** landowners have completed water quality/habitat improvement projects





# Education and Environmental Awareness



Education and Environmental Awareness is the opportunity to provide outdoor learning experiences for students, teachers and the community, increasing knowledge and awareness of the value of our environment and heritage.

Examples of such work include:

- Providing outdoor environmental and heritage education programs for schools
- Collaborating with other agencies and organizations to promote the importance of the environment
- Developing stewardship initiatives

## Initiatives

- › Develop enhanced and consistent interpretive signage and information for conservation areas
- › Create engaging communication materials for HCA website and social media to enhance environmental awareness and the programs and services conservation authorities deliver
- › Report on the projects and health and quality of our watershed; e.g., watershed report cards
- › Support community participation through user group engagement and volunteer group coordination
- › Enhance stewardship programs for both urban and rural areas
- › Enhance and adapt outdoor environmental and cultural education programs with new technology, curriculum and trends
- › Participate in collaborative programs and research projects with our academic institutions, government agencies, private-sector partners and environmental experts
- › Identify and support outreach opportunities within all of our program areas
- › Identify and create input and engagement opportunities for conservation area visitors on site
- › Promote the connection between environmental health and human wellness



## Next Steps

The 2019-2023 Hamilton Conservation Authority Strategic Plan has been completed to highlight the HCA's five priority areas and associated program initiatives. This plan will guide our annual priorities for business and project plans as well as employee objectives. It will direct resource allocations for workforce planning and budgeting. Each year, progress will be measured through an annual report to highlight projects and programs undertaken and how they relate to addressing the priorities in the Strategic Plan.



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