



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

April 2, 2026



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Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, April 2, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

Hamilton Conservation Authority conducts meetings in a hybrid format: in-person and via WebEx platform.

All meetings can be viewed live on HCA's You Tube Channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/HamiltonConservation>

1. Call to Order

– Brad Clark

1.1. Land Acknowledgment

2. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

3. Approval of Agenda

4. Delegations

5. Consent Items for Applications, Minutes and Correspondence

- 5.1. Permit Applications Summary Report Page 1
- 5.2. Approval of Board of Directors Minutes – March 5, 2026 Page 5
- 5.3. Approved – November 20, 2025 Budget & Administration Committee Minutes – for receipt only Page 13
- 5.4. Email correspondence with respect to City of Hamilton Climate Change Funding Page 19
- 5.5. Email correspondence from the Ministry Environment, Conservation and Parks to Board Chairs regarding legislative amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* Page 23
- 5.6. Email correspondence from Ministry Environment, Conservation and Parks with respect to the Minister's direction for conservation authorities regarding fee changes associated with planning, development and permitting fees Page 33

6. Foundation Briefing

Foundation Vice Chair – Graham Reid

7. Member Briefing

- 7.1. 2025 HCA Annual Report – Lisa Burnside Page 35
- 7.2. Verbal Update – Provincial Announcement – Conservation Authorities Act/Amalgamation
– Lisa Burnside

8. Business Arising from the Minutes

9. Reports from Budget & Administration Committee and Conservation Advisory Board

10. Other Staff Reports/Memorandums

- 10.1. Request for Proposal – Bidder Results – Dundas Valley Creeks Floodplain Mapping Study
– Jonathan Bastien Page 55
- 10.2. Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Project – SC-5, Stage 4 Archaeological
Assessment Request for Proposal – Scott Peck Page 59

Memorandums to be received

- 10.3. Watershed Conditions Memorandum – Jonathan Bastien Page 63
- 10.4. Conservation Areas Services Update – Liam Fletcher Page 67

11. New Business

12. In-Camera Items

- 12.1 Confidential Correspondence – BD/Apr 01-2026
(Land Matter)

12. Next Meeting – Thursday, May 7, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

13. Adjournment



Report to: Board of Directors

Approved for Circulation By: Lisa Burnside, CAO

Reviewed By: T. Scott Peck, MCIP, RPP, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer/Director, Watershed Management Services

Prepared By: Mike Stone, MCIP, RPP, Senior Manager, Watershed Planning, Stewardship & Ecological Services

Meeting Date: April 2, 2026

Subject: Permit Applications Summary Report

HCA permit applications approved by staff under the *Conservation Authorities Act* and *Ontario Regulation 41/24* between the dates of February 21, 2026 to March 19, 2026 are summarized in the following Permit Applications Summary Report (PASR-3/26).

Recommendation:

THAT the Board of Directors receive this Permit Application Summary Report PASR-3/26 as information.

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HAMILTON REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

PERMIT APPLICATION SUMMARY REPORT (PASR 3/26)

HCA permit applications approved under the Conservation Authorities Act and Ontario Regulation 41/24 between the dates of February 21, 2026 - March 19, 2026

File Number	Date Received	Date Permit Issued	Review Days	Applicant Name	Location	Application Description	Recommendation / Conditions
A/F,C/26/05	03-Feb-26	26-Feb-26	24		23 Robarts Dr Lot , Concession Ancaster	for the installation of an inground pool and construction of a deck addition, patio, and associated landscaping	Approved subject to standard conditions.
A/F,C,A/26/10	03-Mar-26	09-Mar-26	29		Governor's Rd (Dundas Valley) Lot 46, Concession 1 Ancaster	for watermain rehabilitation project C13-03-24 (2026)	Approved subject to standard conditions.
H/F,A/26/11	20-Feb-26	12-Mar-26	22		565 Aberdeen Ave Lot , Concession Hamilton	for the debris removal from the Highway 403 Sewer Inlet (HC13IL01)	Approved subject to standard conditions.
H/F,A/26/12	20-Feb-26	12-Mar-26	22		565 Aberdeen Ave Lot 20, 21, Concession 4 Hamilton	for the debris removal from Chedoke Creek West Inlet (HD12OL01) and Chedoke Creek East Inlet (HE13IL01)	Approved subject to standard conditions.
D/A/26/07	20-Feb-26	12-Mar-26	22		York Rd Parkette Lot , Concession Dundas	for the debris removal from the Sydenham Creek Sewer Inlet (DI07IL01)	Approved subject to standard conditions.

HAMILTON REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

PERMIT APPLICATION SUMMARY REPORT (PASR 3/26)

HCA permit applications approved under the Conservation Authorities Act and Ontario Regulation 41/24 between the dates of February 21, 2026 - March 19, 2026

D/A/26/08	20-Feb-26	12-Mar-26	22		40 McKay Rd Lot 18, Concession 1 Dundas	for the debris removal from the McKay Rd Sewer Inlet (DH05IL04)	Approved subject to standard conditions.
SC/C/26/13	26-Feb-26	18-Mar-26	22		11 Wendakee Dr Lot 4, Concession BF Stoney Creek	for the construction of attached garage, porch, and balcony additions to an existing single detached dwelling	Approved subject to standard conditions.

Hamilton Region Conservation Authority

Minutes

Board of Directors Meeting

March 5, 2026

Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held on Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 6:00 p.m., held virtually via Webex, and livestreamed on YouTube.

PRESENT:

Craig Cassar	Elise Copps
Lisa DiCesare	Susan Fielding – In the Chair
Mike Spadafora	Wayne Terryberry
Alex Wilson	Maureen Wilson

Graham Reid – Foundation Vice Chair

REGRETS: **Brad Clark, Jeff Beattie, Matt Francis**

STAFF PRESENT: **Jonathan Bastien, Lisa Burnside, Gord Costie, Marlene Ferreira, Scott Fleming, Liam Fletcher, Brandon Good, Matt Hall, Ben Laing, Amanda Martin, Lesley McDonell, Bryson McEwen, Scott Peck, Sarah Piett, Mike Stone, Jaime Tellier, Jeff Tweedle, Stacey Van Opstal, and Sandra Winninger**

OTHERS: **None**

For clarity purposes, items appear in the order in which they were addressed.

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present. HCA's Indigenous Land Acknowledgement was read.

2. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

The Chair asked members to declare any conflicts under the Board's Governance Policy. There were none.

3. Approval of Agenda

The Chair requested any additions or deletions to the agenda. Lisa Burnside indicated an addendum was circulated and will be addressed under Reports to be Approved, following 10.1.

BD12, 3600

**MOVED BY: Craig Cassar
SECONDED BY: Wayne Terryberry**

THAT the agenda be approved, as amended.

CARRIED

4. Delegations

There were none.

5. Consent Items for Applications, Minutes and Correspondence

The following consent items were adopted:

- 5.1. Permit Applications Summary Report
- 5.2. Approval of Board of Directors Minutes – February 5, 2026
- 5.3. Approved – December 11, 2026 Conservation Advisory Board Minutes – for receipt only

6. Foundation Briefing

Graham Reid, Vice Chair of the Foundation reported that a total of \$52,489.50 in donations was received between February 1st and February 28th, 2026. This includes the second pledge payment of \$50,000 from TD Bank in support of Saltfleet Conservation Area.

The Foundation was also grateful to partner with a local spin studio, Steel City Cycle, who hosted a community ride with proceeds benefiting the Hamilton Conservation Foundation. It is hoped that more of these types of partnerships with other local businesses will occur throughout the year.

Additional funds were directed to various projects including Dundas Valley Trails, Outdoor Education, Land Acquisition, and Greatest Needs. This brings the fiscal year-to-date fundraising total to \$298,467, which represents 60% of the fundraising goal.

Additionally, Graham shared that André Chabot has stepped down as Chair of the Foundation's Board of Directors, having accepted a new position in Ottawa. The

Foundation thanks him for his three years of service and wishes him the best of luck. Graham will serve as Chair until the next election of officers in June 2026.

The HCA and Foundation will formally recognize André's volunteer service, with Lisa Burnside and Amanda Martin coordinating the expression of appreciation.

BD12, 3601

**MOVED BY: Maureen Wilson
SECONDED BY: Elise Copps**

THAT the Foundation Briefing be received.

CARRIED

7. Member Briefing

There was none.

8. Business Arising from the Minutes

There was none.

9. Reports from Budget & Administration Committee and Conservation Advisory Board

9.1. Conservation Advisory Board – February 12, 2026
(Recommendations)

9.1.1 CA 2604 Volunteer Program Business Plan

Wayne Terryberry provided an overview of the staff report highlighting the plan formalizes the procedures to be used to grow and fund volunteer engagement at the Hamilton Conservation Authority.

BD12, 3602

**MOVED BY: Wayne Terryberry
SECONDED BY: Craig Cassar**

THAT the Conservation Advisory Board recommends to the Board of Directors:

THAT the HCA Volunteer Business Plan be approved as presented

CARRIED

9.1.2 CA 2605 2025 Westfield Artifact Accessions and Deaccessions

Wayne Terryberry provided a summary of the staff report which listed the items proposed to be accessioned into the artifact collection as well as providing a list of objects that following a review of the artifact inventory, are recommended for deaccessioning.

BD12, 3603**MOVED BY: Wayne Terryberry
SECONDED BY: Lisa DiCesare****THAT the Conservation Advisory Board recommends to the Board of Directors:****THAT the Westfield 2025 Artifact Accessions and Deaccessions List be accepted as the artifacts to be added to the Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area and the Hamilton Conservation Authority collection or artifacts to be removed from the WHVCA and HCA collection.****CARRIED****9.1.3 CA2606 Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Management Plan**

Wayne Terryberry provided a summary of the staff report which provides background on the invasive insect and its impact on Eastern Hemlock trees within the watershed, specifically within the Dundas Valley where there are over 20,000 Eastern Hemlocks. The loss of these trees would have significant ecological impacts, particularly in riparian areas where hemlocks contribute to erosion control, flood mitigation, and stream cooling that supports fish habitat.

The recommended strategy establishes a multi-year approach to prioritize, inventory, treat, and monitor affected trees. The recommended strategy focuses on protecting hemlocks within riparian zones over a four-year cycle.

It was noted that an amendment from the Conservation Advisory Board was made to the original motion requesting staff to conduct a further review of Hemlocks on HCA lands as well as to NIA partners, who also have Hemlocks affected by this plight, to explore regionalized long-term management options.

BD12, 3604**MOVED BY: Wayne Terryberry
SECONDED BY: Lisa DiCesare****THAT the Conservation Advisory Board recommends to the Board of Directors;****THAT the *Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Management Plan (January 2026)* be adopted; and further**

THAT the management plan's recommended strategy, Strategy 5 – Protect Trees in Riparian Areas, be implemented.

THAT staff undertake further review on other HCA lands;

THAT staff undertake outreach to Biodiversity Action Plan partners for possible collaborative approaches to support regional management and funding;

THAT staff undertake further review on the scale of management approaches if additional funds were available;

THAT staff report back to Conservation Advisory Board on these items at a future meeting

CARRIED

10. Other Staff Reports/Memoranda

Reports to be Approved

10.1. Valens Lake Conservation Area Campfire Wood Contract

Brandon Good provided an overview of the staff report and answered members' questions. The report came forward to the Board for approval in accordance with the Purchasing policy.

BD12, 3605

**MOVED BY: Wayne Terryberry
SECONDED BY: Elise Copps**

THAT the contract for the supply and delivery of campfire wood at Valens Lake Conservation Area be awarded to The Firewood Guys, for the 2026 calendar year for an estimated total of \$75,900.00 (excluding HST).

CARRIED

10.5 Proposed reconstruction of an industrial building and construction of an addition within the Regulated Area of Stoney Creek at 330-332 & 340 Lake Avenue North, City of Hamilton

The Board approved a permit for reconstructing an industrial building and adding a minor extension in a regulated flood area of Stoney Creek. Staff noted that the new design includes floodproofing, improving on current conditions, though safe access

criteria are not fully met due to flood depth. The Board supported the application because the proposed work will not increase existing flood risks that are associated with the existing flooding hazard.

BD12, 3606

**MOVED BY: Maureen Wilson
SECONDED BY: Lisa DiCesare**

THAT the HCA Board of Directors approve the issuance of a permit under Section 28.1 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*, subject to submission of final drawings and subject to standard conditions, for reconstruction of an industrial building and construction of an addition within the regulated area associated with Stoney Creek at 330-332 & 340 Lake Avenue North, Stoney Creek, City of Hamilton.

CARRIED

Reports to be Received

10.2. 2025 Annual Monitoring Program Summary

Watershed Management Services' staff provided a summary of of the terrestrial, aquatic and water quality monitoring that occurred in 2025. The data gathered from the monitoring sites helps to inform long-term trends in the health of the watershed.

BD12, 3607

**MOVED BY: Mike Spadafora
SECONDED BY: Wayne Terryberry**

THAT the Memorandum entitled 2025 Annual Monitoring Program Summary be received.

CARRIED

10.3. Watershed Conditions Report

Jonathan Bastien presented a summary of the memorandum, indicating that during the period of January 23rd, 2026 to February 23rd, 2026, there were no significant watercourse flooding events, no significant water safety concern events, and no Lake Ontario shoreline flooding events. However, one rain and snowmelt event (February 19th to 23rd) warranted issuing messages and additional monitoring of watercourse conditions. An active flood watch due to the rain and increased snow melt expected over the next few days.

BD12, 3608**MOVED BY: Alex Wilson
SECONDED BY: Lisa DiCesare****THAT the memorandum entitled Watershed Conditions Report be received.****CARRIED****10.4. Conservation Areas Services Update**

Brandon Good provided a summary of the memorandum providing an update on upcoming activities in the conservation areas:

- Maple Syrup season begins at Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area beginning March 1, 2026 and,
- Day Camp at Dundas Valley Conservation Area for March Break, March 16 to 20, 2026

BD12, 3609**MOVED BY: Craig Cassar
SECONDED BY: Mike Spadafora****THAT the memorandum entitled Conservation Areas Services Update be received.****CARRIED****11. New Business**

There was none.

12. In-Camera Items**BD12, 3610****MOVED BY: Wayne Terryberry
SECONDED BY: Alex Wilson****THAT the Board of Directors moves *in camera* for matters of law, personnel and property.****CARRIED**

During the *in-camera* session, one land matter was discussed.

12.1. Confidential Verbal Update – BD/Mar 01-2026
(Land Matter)

Scott Peck provided a verbal update regarding a land matter and answered the members' questions.

BD12, 3611

MOVED BY: Mike Spadafora
SECONDED BY: Wayne Terryberry

THAT the confidential verbal update entitled BD/Mar 01-2026 be received and remain in camera;

CARRIED

BD12, 3612

MOVED BY: Mareen Wilson
SECONDED BY: Lisa DiCesare

THAT the Board of Directors moves out of closed session.

CARRIED

13. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on Thursday, April 2, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. at the HCA Main Administration Office – Woodend Auditorium, 838 Mineral Springs Road, Ancaster, Ontario.

14. Adjournment

On motion, the meeting was adjourned.

Scott Fleming
Secretary-Treasurer

Hamilton Conservation Authority

Minutes

Budget & Administration Committee

Thursday, November 20, 2025

Minutes of the Budget & Administration Committee meeting held on Thursday, November 20, 2025 at 2:00 p.m., fully virtually via Webex platform and livestreamed on YouTube.

Present: Susan Fielding, in the Chair
Brad Clark
Alex Wilson
Maureen Wilson

Regrets: Lisa DiCesare

Staff Present: Gord Costie, Marlene Ferreira, Scott Fleming, Liam Fletcher, Brandon Good, Rob Gray, Matt Hall, Amanda Martin, Scott Peck, Mike Stone, Jaime Tellier, and Sandra Winninger

Others Present: None

1. Welcome

The Chair called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present.

2. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

The Chair asked members to declare any conflicts under the HCA Administrative By-law. There were none.

3. Approval of Agenda

The Chair requested any additions or deletions to the agenda.

BA 2537

MOVED BY: Maureen Wilson

SECONDED BY: Brad Clark

THAT the agenda be approved.

CARRIED

4. Delegations

There were none.

5. Consent Items

The following consent items were adopted:

5.1. Approval of Budget & Administration Committee Minutes – September 18, 2025

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

There was none.

7. Staff Reports/Memoranda

Memorandums to be received

7.1. HCA 2025 3rd Quarter Financial Results – Operating

Scott Fleming provided a summary of the staff memorandum, highlighting the third quarter results indicated that the HCA is performing well but are generally not as favourable when compared to previous years.

In response to a question posed by Maureen Wilson, Scott F indicated that there were four new staff hired during this budget year, noting that 2025 budget was designed as a capacity building budget. Staff indicated that they will provide further information to Councillor Wilson in the near future.

BA 2538

MOVED BY: Brad Clark

SECONDED BY: Alex Wilson

**THAT the Memorandum entitled HCA 2025 3rd Quarter
Financial Results – Operating be received.**

CARRIED

7.2. HCA 2025 3rd Quarter Cumulated Financial Results – Capital

and Major Maintenance

Matt Hall provided an overview of the memorandum, highlighting the capital projects that have been completed to date as well as those still in progress.

BA 2539**MOVED BY: Alex Wilson
SECONDED BY: Brad Clark****THAT the Memorandum entitled HCA 2025 3rd Quarter Financial Results – Capital and Major Maintenance be received.****CARRIED**7.3. HCA 3rd Quarter Vendor Report

Scott Fleming provided a summary of the staff memorandum and answered members' questions.

In response to a question posed by Alex Wilson, staff indicated the criteria used to source out suppliers included the availability of the material required, the price as well as the location of the company in relation to the distance to the project site. Additionally, the HCA does utilize donations of raw materials from local companies when available.

BA 2540**MOVED BY: Maureen Wilson
SECONDED BY: Brad Clark****THAT the Memorandum entitled HCA 2025 3rd Quarter Vendor Report be received.****CARRIED**Reports for Recommendation7.4. HCA Reserves Policy

Scott Fleming provided an overview of the report noting the policy that will standardize and support decision making around the HCA's financial reserves as well as creating transparency by outlining the purpose of the reserves, target minimums, reporting requirements and governance. The Policy will be reviewed every four years, with changes requiring Board approval. In response to a question posed by Alex Wilson, Scott Fleming provided clarification between reserves held for specific purpose, such as the Satlfleet Wetland Project versus funds that are carried forward after year-end because the project has not yet been completed; the money would continue to be held for that project until it's completion.

BA 2541**MOVED BY: Maureen Wilson
SECONDED BY: Alex Wilson****THAT the Budget & Administration Committee recommends to the Board of Directors,****THAT the HCA Reserves Policy, dated November 2025, as appended to this report, be approved; and further****THAT the Fifty Point Wetland reserve be closed and unused balance of \$85,977.72 be transferred to the Saltfleet CA Wetland Restoration Project reserve.****CARRIED****7.5. Project Technical Advisory Committee – Insurance Coverage**

Mike Stone provided an overview of the staff report indicating that the Committee (PTAC) provides assistance to staff, reviewing and approving funding applications for the Hamilton-Halton Watershed Stewardship Program. The members indicated on Appendix A are to be formally recognized in order to ensure they are covered under the HCA's insurance.

BA 2542**MOVED BY:
SECONDED BY:****THAT the Budget & Administration Committee recommends to the Board of Directors:****THAT the Project Technical Advisory Committee members be submitted for annual insurance coverage purposes.****CARRIED****7.6. Budget & Administration Committee 2026 Meeting Schedule**

Scott Peck provided an overview of the staff memorandum, which outlines the schedule of meeting for the Budget & Administration Committee for 2026.

BA 2543**MOVED BY: Maureen Wilson
SECONDED BY: Brad Clark**

THAT the 2025 Budget and Administration Committee Meeting Schedule be received.

CARRIED

8. New Business

There was none.

9. In-Camera Items for Matters of Law, Personnel and Property

There was none.

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Budget and Administration Committee will be held on Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. at the HCA Main Administration Office – Woodend Auditorium, 838 Mineral Springs Road, Ancaster, Ontario.

11. Adjournment

On motion, the meeting adjourned.

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From: [Peter Appleton](#)
To: [Scott Peck](#); [Sandra Wwinner](#)
Cc: [Nature](#)
Subject: Re: Recent councilors on the HCA board that voted against climate office of Hamilton
Date: March 5, 2026 2:33:34 PM

Scott and Sandra

I would appreciate it very much if you are able to bring up these issues and have this letter recognized and read out at the next board meeting.
Thank you very much for your time and cooperation

Peter

On Wed, Mar 4, 2026 at 2:49 PM Scott Peck <scott.peck@conservationhamilton.ca> wrote:

Good afternoon Peter,

Thank you for your email and for sharing your concerns.

The Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA) Board is comprised of 11 members, including 10 appointed by the City of Hamilton and one by the Township of Puslinch. While seven of the City appointees are sitting City Councillors, their role as HCA Board members is distinct from their role at City Council.

In their capacity as HCA Board members, individuals are responsible for decisions related to the HCA's legislated mandate. The current Board has supported and approved a range of environmental initiatives, including the Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Project, the HCA Climate Change Strategy and associated funding, the HCA Land Acquisition Strategy, the City's Biodiversity Action Plan, and ongoing natural area inventory, enhancement and restoration work. These actions reflect the Board's continued commitment to watershed protection, climate resilience, and biodiversity.

Decisions made by Councillors in their role at City Council are separate from HCA governance. The HCA does not have authority over, or involvement in, how Councillors vote on City programs or initiatives. Matters related to City Council decisions are within the jurisdiction of the City of Hamilton.

Thank you,

T. Scott Peck, B.A., DPA, MCIP, RPP, CMMIII
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer/

Director, Watershed Management Services

Hamilton Conservation Authority
Phone: 905-525-2181, Ext. 130

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From: Peter Appleton <pclappleton@gmail.com>
Sent: March 4, 2026 12:33 PM
To: Scott Peck <scott.peck@conservationhamilton.ca>; Nature <nature@conservationhamilton.ca>
Subject: Recent councilors on the HCA board that voted against climate office of Hamilton

Scott and others,

Great to see spring weather here!

As you likely know a motion to defer the Climate office of Hamilton and end funding was proposed by CLLR Spadafora and Francis.

Thankfully the Council as a whole voted against this.

It is absolutely appalling that board members of the HCA are climate deniers and putting forth motions to abolition the Climate office of Hamilton.

I would like to hear that a formal investigation into this is going forward and interviews with these two are started to find our how they could possibly come to a conclusion like this.

thank you for your cooperation

Peter

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Peter Appleton

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Peter Appleton
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Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks

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

Office of the Minister

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357-2026-736

March 10, 2026

TO: Conservation authorities as listed in Appendix A to the Attachment A
“Minister’s Direction Issued Pursuant to Section 21.3 of the *Conservation
Authorities Act*”

SUBJECT: Minister’s direction for conservation authorities regarding fee changes
associated with planning, development, and permitting fees

I am writing with regards to conservation authority planning, development and permitting fees. Pursuant to my authority under subsection 21.3 (1) of the *Conservation Authorities Act*, I am issuing a new Direction, attached to this letter as Attachment A. This Direction is consistent with the Directions that were previously in place for the 2023, 2024 and 2025 calendar years.

The purpose of this Direction, which is effective from March 10, 2026, to February 28, 2027, is to require a conservation authority not to change the amount of the fee it charges or the manner in which it determines the fee for any program or service related to reviewing and commenting on planning and development related proposals or land use planning policies, or for permits issued by conservation authorities. This Direction is intended to support less costly approvals in order to help increase housing supply and affordability in Ontario.

This Direction applies to the conservation authorities listed in Appendix A, who are encouraged to make the Direction publicly available on the Governance section of their websites.

If you have any questions regarding this Direction, please contact the ministry at ca.office@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,

Todd McCarthy
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

c: The Honourable Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

**Minister’s Direction Issued Pursuant to Section 21.3 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*
(this “Direction”)**

WHEREAS section 21.2 of the *Conservation Authorities Act* permits a conservation authority to charge a fee for a program or service if the program or service is included in the Minister’s list of classes of programs and services in respect of which a conservation authority may charge a fee;

AND WHEREAS subsections 21.2 (6) and 21.2 (7) of the *Conservation Authorities Act* provide that a conservation authority shall adopt a written fee policy that includes a fee schedule listing the programs and services that it provides in respect of which it charges a fee, and the amount of the fee charged for each program or service or the manner in which the fee is determined (a “**Fee Schedule**”);

AND WHEREAS subsection 21.2 (10) of the *Conservation Authorities Act* provides that a conservation authority may make a change to the list of fees set out in the fee schedule or to the amount of any fee or the manner in which a fee is determined, provided the authority shall give notice of the proposed change to the public in a manner it considers appropriate;

AND WHEREAS section 21.3 of the *Conservation Authorities Act* provides the Minister with the authority to give a written direction to an authority directing it not to change the amount of any fee it charges under subsection 21.2 (10), in respect of a program or service set out in the list referred to in subsection 21.2 (2), for the period specified in the direction;

NOW THEREFORE pursuant to the authority of the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks under section 21.3, the conservation authorities set out under Appendix “A” of this Direction (the “**conservation authorities**” or each, a “**conservation authority**”) are hereby directed as follows:

Fee Changes Prohibition

1. Commencing on the Effective Date and for the duration of the Term of this Direction, a conservation authority is prohibited from making a change under subsection 21.2 (10) of the *Conservation Authorities Act* to the amount of any fee or the manner in which a fee is determined in its fee schedule if such a change would have the effect of changing the fee amount for the programs and services described in paragraphs 2 and 3 of this Direction.

Program and Service Fees Impacted

2. This Direction applies to any fee set out in the Fee Schedule of a conservation authority, including without limitation fees for any mandatory program or service (Category 1), municipal program or service (Category 2), or conservation authority recommended program or service (Category 3) related to reviewing and commenting on planning and

Attachment A

development related proposals, applications, or land use planning policies, or for conservation authority permitting.

3. For greater certainty, this Direction applies to any fees in respect of the following programs or services provided under the Mandatory Programs and Services regulation ([O. Reg. 686/21](#)):
 - a. Section 6: programs and services related to reviewing applications and proposals under the *Aggregate Resources Act*, *Drainage Act*, *Environmental Assessment Act*, and the *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act*, for the purpose of commenting on the risks related to natural hazards arising from the proposal,
 - b. Section 7: programs and services related to ensuring that decisions under the *Planning Act* are consistent with the natural hazards policies in the policy statements issued under section 3 of the *Planning Act* and are in conformance with any natural hazard policies included in a provincial plan as defined in section 1 of that Act,
 - c. Section 8: programs and services related to conservation authority duties, functions, and responsibilities to administer and enforce section 28 and its regulations, section 28.0.1, and section 30.1 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*,
 - d. Paragraph 4 of subsection 13 (3): programs and services related to reviewing and commenting on any proposal made under another Act for the purpose of determining whether the proposal relates to a significant drinking water threat or may impact any drinking water sources protected by a source protection plan, and
 - e. Subparagraph 4 iv of section 15: programs and services related to reviewing and commenting on proposals made under other Acts for the purpose of determining the proposal's impact on the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan and the Lake Simcoe watershed.

Application

4. This Direction, applies to all conservation authorities in Ontario, listed in Appendix "A" to this Direction.
5. For greater certainty, this Direction also applies to the conservation authorities listed in Appendix "A" to this Direction when such conservation authorities are meeting as a source protection authority under the *Clean Water Act, 2006*.

Effective Date and Term

6. This Direction is effective from March 10, 2026 (the "**Effective Date**").
7. The term of this Direction is the period from the Effective Date to February 28, 2027 (the "**Term**").

Attachment A

Amendments

8. This Direction may be amended in writing from time to time at the sole discretion of the Minister.

**HIS MAJESTY THE KING IN RIGHT OF ONTARIO
as represented by the
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Todd McCarthy", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and then curves back under the name.

Todd McCarthy
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
March 10, 2026

APPENDIX A

LIST OF CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES TO WHICH THE DIRECTION APPLIES

Ausable Bayfield CA

R.R. #3
71108 Morrison Line
Exeter ON N0M 1S5
Davin Heinbuck
dheinbuck@abca.on.ca

Cataraqui Region CA

Box 160
1641 Perth Road
Glenburnie ON K0H 1S0
David Ellingwood
dellingwood@crca.ca

Catfish Creek CA

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Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks

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



Office of the Minister

Bureau du ministre

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Tél. : 416 314-6790

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



Hamilton
Conservation
Authority

A Healthy Watershed for Everyone

20 25

ANNUAL REPORT

Our Vision

A healthy watershed for everyone.

Our Mission

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

Our Values

Collaboration

Customer Service

Integrity

Respect

Innovation

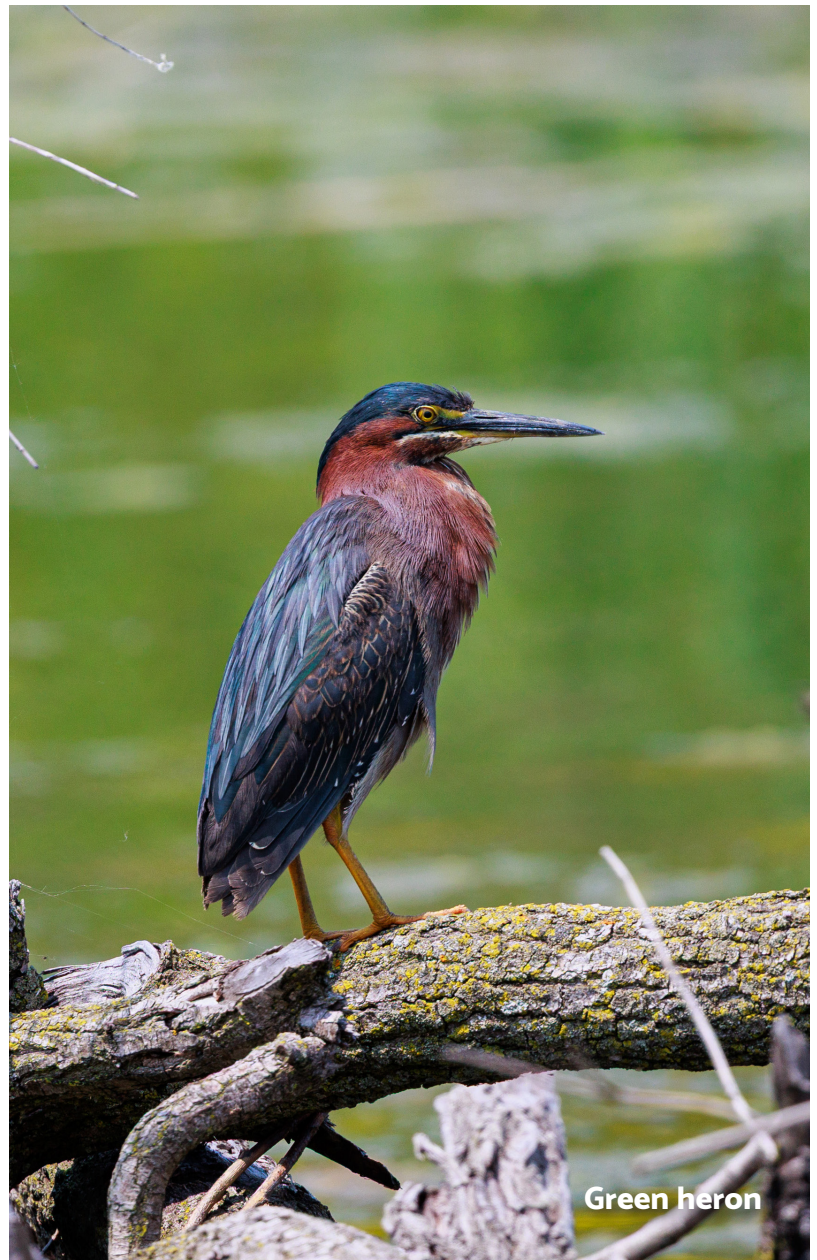
2025 HCA Board of Directors

Councillor Jeff Beattie
Councillor Craig Cassar
Councillor Brad Clark – Chair
Elise Copps (November – December)
Lisa DiCesare
Susan Fielding – Vice Chair
Councillor Matt Francis
Brian McHattie (January – August)
Councillor Mike Spadafora
Wayne Terryberry
Councillor Alex Wilson
Councillor Maureen Wilson

Land Acknowledgment

The HCA joins in stewardship of lands and waters with Indigenous Peoples who have cared for them since time before memory. We acknowledge that the land on which we gather, and the HCA watershed, is part of the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee.

As an organization, we are committed to learning about the shared history and experiences of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and creating relationships based on respect, trust and friendship. In our shared gratitude for every aspect of the natural world, may we create a lasting legacy now and for future generations.



Green heron

WHO WE ARE

Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA) is one of 36 conservation authorities in Ontario and the largest environmental management agency in the watershed. Located at the western end of Lake Ontario, HCA is dedicated to the conservation and enjoyment of watershed lands and water resources.

Established in 1958, the organization became the Hamilton Conservation Authority in 1966. HCA's watershed spans from the headwaters, over the Niagara Escarpment to Cootes Paradise, Hamilton Harbour and Lake Ontario, following the land and flow of water across the landscape.

HCA's work includes protecting people and property from flooding and erosion, managing conservation and recreational lands, and delivering environmental education and stewardship programs.

HCA WATERSHED



4,732 hectares of HCA lands
22 conservation areas
180 km of HCA trails

10% of watershed owned and managed by HCA
2 participating municipalities
650,000 population

MESSAGE FROM HCA CAO & CHAIR

It is with pride that we present the 2025 Annual Report, reflecting a year of progress, collaboration, and commitment to the watershed's health.

In 2025, HCA advanced key work across our four strategic plan priority areas. We continued the Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Project, completing the second of four planned wetlands to reduce flooding, protect downstream properties, and boost local biodiversity. Early monitoring already shows more frogs, birds, and native plants thriving.

Watershed Resources Management remained a priority. We updated floodplain mapping and reviewed monitoring networks to better forecast floods, manage low water, and support permit decisions and planning recommendations. For Natural Heritage, we acquired 18.17 hectares of Fletcher Creek swamp forest to strengthen ecological corridors between Valens Lake Conservation Area and Fletcher Creek Ecological Preserve.

HCA continued to modernize systems as an Organizational Excellence priority, to support transparency, sound decision-making, and public access to information. A new online Open Data Hub was launched, which expands public access to watershed maps and environmental data.

Under Connecting People to Nature, we launched the Basadinaa Experience in Dundas Valley Conservation Area, featuring 13 Indigenous-led interpretive signs along the Main Loop Trail. This project shares teachings from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Six Nations of the Grand River, bringing conservation, education, and reconciliation together.

At year's end, the province released a proposal for potential regional consolidation of conservation authorities. While we don't support the Province's approach, we are actively participating in the consultation process, providing informed feedback, and working constructively to identify alternatives that maintain effective watershed-based conservation and strong local governance. Throughout this work, we remain focused on our mandate and the services our communities rely on.

None of these accomplishments would be possible without the dedication of our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and partners. Their commitment and expertise continue to advance our mission and ensure that our watershed remains healthy, resilient, and protected for generations to come.

Brad Clark
Chair

Lisa Burnside
Chief Administrative Officer





HCA staff at Confederation Beach Park

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE



Focused on our organizational resources to ensure efficient and responsive operations are available to meet the needs of the future.



Key Measures



54% of operating revenue was self-generated through park operations, fees, and other earned income, supporting financial resilience and reducing reliance on external funding.



19 media releases contributed to **286** news stories, showing strong public and media interest in watershed protection and HCA initiatives.



HCA's website recorded more than **1.4 million** page views, demonstrating high public demand for information about conservation, recreation, and environmental stewardship.



Social media engagement included **131,089** engagements on Facebook, **13,732** on Instagram, **2,809** on X, and **13,286** on LinkedIn, extending HCA's reach across diverse audiences.



HCA circulated **48** e-newsletters to **27,920** subscribers, keeping residents, partners, and stakeholders informed and engaged throughout the year.



HCA staff presenting at Conservation Areas Workshop

PROGRESS AND PRIORITIES

HCA focused on building a stronger organization to protect the watershed and serve our communities for the long term. Investments in people, technology, and partnerships supported financial sustainability, inclusive workplaces, and responsive services across the watershed. Together, these efforts support a skilled, informed, and resilient workforce prepared to respond to environmental challenges while serving the public with professionalism and care.

A resilient workforce delivering conservation results

- Secured more than \$569,570 in grant funding to advance priority work across the watershed, including Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Project, Natural Areas Inventory Project, Basadinaa Experience, environmental education, invasive species management, and trail maintenance.
- Strengthened our workplace culture through updated policies, focused training, and a renewed emphasis on inclusion and learning. The launch of HCA's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Framework confirmed our commitment to a respectful, inclusive, and innovative workplace where staff feel valued and able to contribute their skills.
- Supported staff with comprehensive training for readiness and safety across many roles, including first aid, field and operational safety, report writing, Indigenous learning, mental health awareness, communications, and media relations. Organization-wide learning in support of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation furthered HCA's ongoing journey toward reconciliation and helped deepen understanding, relationships, and respect with First Nations partners and communities.

Modern systems that improve transparency and decision making

- Launched a new online Open Data Hub, which expanded public access to watershed maps and environmental data, including boundaries, stream networks, land cover, and elevation information. This platform supports planning, research, and collaboration.

- Refreshed HCA’s website with a modern, accessible design, clearer navigation, and updated photos and branding, making it easier for residents, partners, and visitors to find information about conservation areas, programs, and environmental initiatives.
- Improved corporate records and archives, including staff training, updated retention schedules, and better organization of archival records. This strengthened governance, improved access to information, and supported long-term stewardship of institutional knowledge.
- Expanded digital tools such as TreePlotter and field tablets across conservation areas and watershed management services, allowing staff to assess hazard trees and collect ecological data more efficiently and consistently. These tools improve the quality of data used to guide conservation and management decisions.

Facilities and partnerships that extend our impact

- Invested in facilities, which improved both day-to-day operations and collaboration with partners. Improvements at HCA’s main office included new automated gates and lighting, a reconfigured parking lot and walking path, and interior renovations. This expanded workspace capacity and created more functional meeting areas.



Lake Ontario Coastal Resilience Pilot Project



Office renovations



HCA staff Truth and Reconciliation workshop

- Hosted local Members of Parliament at HCA conservation areas across the watershed, to highlight our role in land conservation, climate resilience, and public access to nature. These site visits helped build an understanding of HCA's impact and the importance of ongoing investment in watershed protection.
- Actively participated in Conservation Ontario forums and workshops, including the Latornell Conservation Symposium and Conservation Areas Workshop, enabling HCA to share expertise, contribute to sector-wide learning, and advance best practices across the province.
- Hosted 24 film productions at HCA conservation areas, generating self-sustaining revenue while showcasing the watershed's natural landscapes to wider audiences.



New autogates



Basadinaa tree planting



Newly installed bridge



Saltfleet Conservation Area

WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT



Focused on safeguarding the health of the watershed and protecting people and property from natural hazards.



Key Measures



92 development permits were issued under Section 28 of the Conservation Authorities Act. **85** permits, or **92%**, were issued within the legislated 90-day timeline.



33 watershed condition messages were issued, including Water Safety, Flood Outlook, and Flood Watch notices, along with Termination Messages to signal a return to normal conditions.



These results reflect consistent, timely permitting and active watershed monitoring that supported public safety and kept municipalities and residents informed during changing weather and water conditions.



Temperature logger installation

PROGRESS AND PRIORITIES

HCA strengthened our ability to protect people and property from flooding and other water-related risks. The focus was on building climate-resilient wetlands, improving data and mapping to support permit decisions and planning recommendations, and monitoring water quality to support a healthier watershed.

Building climate resilient wetlands and waterways

- Advanced the Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Project, where early monitoring is already showing encouraging signs of frogs and waterfowl using the new habitat. Construction of the second wetland was completed, and archaeological work for a third wetland moved forward, adding future flood storage and habitat that will help protect downstream communities. Long-term monitoring of these wetlands will help HCA track how they change over time and ensure the habitat remains healthy and resilient.
- Completed a Riparian Buffer Analysis, mapping and measuring vegetated areas along watercourses to identify where more trees and plants can improve water quality. As part of this work, the Building Better Buffers workshop brought landowners together on a restoration site to learn about the value of watercourse buffers, and 187 native plants were installed. These efforts support healthier creeks and are an important step toward improving conditions in Hamilton Harbour.

Improving data for flood safety and planning

- Updated HCA's Planning and Regulation Policies to reflect recent changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and to support HCA's new Shoreline Management Plan. This ensures that decisions about where and how development occurs better account for natural hazards and shoreline risks. The updates help keep people and property out of harm's way while supporting responsible growth.

- Completed a system review of HCA’s Water Resources Engineering Monitoring Network, covering rain gauges, streamflow gauges, reservoir water level gauges, and snow survey sites across the watershed. The review identified upgrades to increase the quantity and quality of data, expand the number of monitoring locations, and improve network reliability. This information supports flood forecasting and warning, low-water management, and dam operations at Christie Lake and Valens Lake Conservation Areas.
- Finalized new floodplain mapping, including public consultation, for Stoney Creek Numbered Watercourses, Battlefield and Stoney Creeks, and Redhill Creek. Work also began on mapping for Borer’s, Logie’s, and Sydenham Creeks, as well as watercourses within Dundas Valley. Up-to-date floodplain maps provide the detailed flood hazard information needed to support planning, permitting, and emergency preparedness.



Stream mapping

Monitoring water quality and supporting Hamilton Harbour

- Continued to invest in watershed monitoring programs that track nutrients, sediment, and other factors that affect watershed health. Provincial water and groundwater quality monitoring was conducted at six surface water sites and six groundwater sites, producing long-term data sets that support trend analysis and adaptive restoration and management plans.
- Delivered monitoring in support of City of Hamilton projects and the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan, including E. coli. monitoring at multiple creek locations, erosion monitoring at several sites, and regular water quality monitoring at 11 creek sites flowing into Hamilton Harbour. This work supports shared goals to reduce pollution, improve habitat, and move closer to delisting Hamilton Harbour as an Area of Concern.




Building Better Buffers workshop




Christmas tree creek restoration

NATURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION

 Focused on the management and conservation of natural areas, which include the forests, wetlands, meadows, and watercourses within the watershed.



Key Measures

 Ecology teams conducted **1,343** plant surveys in support of master plans and recorded **53** bird species during these surveys.

 Monitoring included **32** frog call survey stations with **7** frog species counted, **10** forest health plots, **28** fish monitoring sites, **24** benthic invertebrate sites, and **16** stream temperature sites.

 Planting efforts through stewardship and ecology programs included **2,360** lbs of seed, **4,545** trees and shrubs, and **1,428** perennial plugs, supporting long-term habitat restoration across the watershed.

PROGRESS AND PRIORITIES

HCA protected more natural lands, restored key habitats, and strengthened the science needed to respond to climate and biodiversity pressures in the watershed. The focus was on securing priority lands, restoring forests and wetlands, managing invasive species, and working with partners, landowners, and students to care for local ecosystems.

Protecting priority lands and contributing to 30x30

- Acquired 18.17 hectares of the Fletcher Creek swamp forest, protecting a significant wetland and strengthening the natural corridor between Valens Lake Conservation Area and Fletcher Creek Ecological Preserve. This addition helps maintain habitat in a sensitive part of the watershed.
- Created a new funding stream to support land acquisition priorities in HCA's Land Securement Strategy, directing 10% of annual membership pass sales to help protect more natural areas in future years.
- Contributed nearly 4,000 hectares of protected lands officially to Canada's 30x30 conservation target, reflecting decades of community-supported land acquisition, restoration, and stewardship.

Restoring habitats and managing invasive species

- Continued restoration work on HCA owned and managed lands across the watershed. More than 3,000 trees were planted at Eramosa Karst Conservation Area in the first mechanical tree planting in many years. Additional tree and shrub plantings took place at multiple conservation areas and restoration sites, supporting healthier forests, wetlands, and stream corridors.
- Completed 26 projects with 18 landowners through HCA's stewardship program. These included native plant installations, low-impact development projects, litter clean-up, habitat feature installations, invasive species removals, temperature logger installations, bank stabilization events, and watercourse surveys.



HCA staff and volunteer planting

- Staff and partners worked on invasive species control at 32 sites, managing 13 different invasive species. Thousands of stems were removed, and tens of thousands of square metres were treated or brush cut to give native vegetation a better chance to recover. Boot brush stations were installed at popular trailheads to reduce the spread of invasive species.

Supporting species at risk, landowners, and community partners

- Supported turtle conservation through hands-on projects at conservation areas. At Christie Lake Conservation Area, students from Mohawk College helped revitalize turtle nesting beds and build a new nesting area. At Valens Lake Conservation Area, 15 turtle nest protectors were installed over snapping turtle nests, and staff helped safely release more than 50 hatchlings into the lake.
- Installed nesting structures in support of Purple Martin colonies at Fifty Point and Saltfleet Conservation Areas in partnership with the Hamilton Naturalists' Club.



Fish sampling



FREED program workshop



HCA staff with Northern hogsucker

- Through the Hamilton Watershed Stewardship Program, HCA provided funding and technical support to 11 landowners, helping them complete projects that improve wildlife habitat and water quality on their properties. HCA also partnered with groups such as Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Nature@McMaster, City of Hamilton, and Royal Botanical Gardens on stream restoration and invasive species removal projects.

Advancing monitoring and field learning

- Developed a comprehensive plan to better understand how climate change and other pressures are affecting the watershed, bringing together aquatic, terrestrial, and water quality monitoring programs. The plan links these programs to HCA's Climate Change Strategy, helping identify gaps, share data more easily, and guide future adaptation and mitigation actions.
- Hosted students and staff from several colleges and universities, offering field-based learning in restoration, monitoring, and ecological sampling. Activities included ecosystem restoration tours, electrofishing skills sharing, and hands-on workshops, such as the FREED program, which provides field experience to BIPOC students who may not otherwise have access to these opportunities.



Naturalized lawn



Turtle hatchlings



Tree and shrub planting



Fish seining workshop



Fifty Point Conservation Area

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE



Focused on the conservation of HCA lands and connecting communities to natural areas.



Key Measures



HCA welcomed over **904,300** visitors to its conservation areas, including **650,000** visitors to Confederation Beach Park, and **90,400** visitors to Wild Waterworks.



10,411 HCA Membership Passes were sold, reflecting strong community interest in regular access to conservation areas.



Environmental and cultural heritage education programs at Dundas Valley and Westfield Heritage Village engaged **9,326** students from **305** classrooms, and over **201** program days.



HCA hosted **40** volunteer events with **567** volunteers contributing **1,465** hours, including clean-up efforts that removed more than **550** lbs of litter. Westfield volunteers contributed **10,176** hours of service, supporting events, programs, and site operations.

PROGRESS AND PRIORITIES

HCA conservation areas remained as popular destinations for visitors seeking recreation, learning, and connection to nature. HCA focused on making these experiences more inclusive, engaging, and accessible through investments in trails, facilities, and education programs that help visitors enjoy and care for the watershed.

Creating meaningful, inclusive experiences

- Opened the Basadinaa Experience, a new Indigenous-led trail signage journey featuring 13 interpretive signs in the Dundas Valley Conservation Area. “Basadinaa,” meaning “in the valley” in Anishinaabemowin, shares teachings, stories, and perspectives from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Six Nations of the Grand River. Basadinaa is more than a trail; it is an invitation to experience the land through Indigenous knowledge and shared stories. The project launched during National Indigenous History Month and reflects HCA’s ongoing commitment to truth-telling, reconciliation, and building respectful relationships with First Nations partners and communities.
- Launched the Talking Forest trail app at several conservation areas, which uses GPS to trigger audio stories, images, and captions as visitors move along the trails. From wildlife and ecology to history and geology, the app turns each walk into an opportunity to learn.
- Offered inclusive and low-sensory programs, including mindfulness hikes in conservation areas. At Wild Waterworks, a Sensory Day was held in partnership with Autism Ontario, offering a quieter, calmer experience for visitors who benefit from reduced noise and stimulation.



The Basadinaa Experience

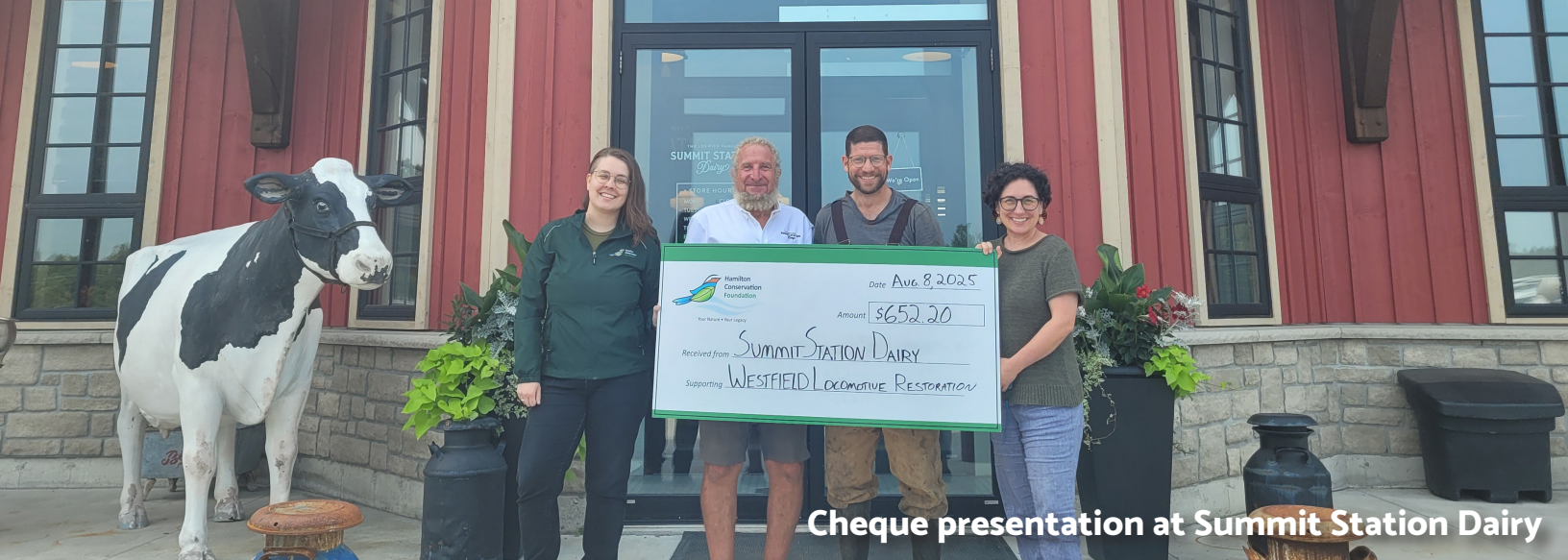
Improving navigation, accessibility, and recreation

- Installed new trail map and wayfinding signage at Christie Lake, Crooks' Hollow, and Spencer Gorge Conservation Areas to help visitors easily navigate HCA trails. Trailhead welcome signs, clear maps, trail ratings, estimated hike times, and QR codes linking to online information all support better trip planning and informed choices on the trails.
- Invested in recreation infrastructure that supports safe, enjoyable outdoor experiences. This included expanding parking and trails at Saltfleet Conservation Area, road rehabilitation and rebuilding the accessible fishing platform at Fifty Point Conservation Area, and replacement of boardwalks and bridges on popular trails. Accessible parking was also expanded at Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area to better welcome visitors with mobility needs. HCA expanded boat rental offerings to include standup paddleboards at Christie Lake and Valens Lake, giving visitors another way to enjoy time on the water.

Planning for future visitors and programs

- Completed several key planning documents to guide future visitor use and investments in conservation areas. HCA finalized and received Board approval for the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area Master Plan, the Chippewa Trail Management Plan, and the Tiffany Falls Conservation Area Visitor Use Management Plan. These plans will help balance recreation, conservation, and safety as demand for access to nature continues to grow.
- Delivered in-school programs that reached hundreds of local students following the cancellation of the Hamilton Children's Water Festival.
- Presented Watershed Steward Awards, recognizing landowners for leadership in caring for their properties and supporting local conservation.





Cheque presentation at Summit Station Dairy

Message from Hamilton Conservation Foundation

Two Partners, One Hamilton Conservation. The Hamilton Conservation Foundation is proud to work alongside HCA to raise and steward charitable funds that protect the watershed’s natural spaces and cultural heritage. Our vision is simple: to be your Foundation of choice for investing in the future of conservation, environmental education, and heritage in the Hamilton watershed.

2025 at a Glance

Thanks to our generous community of supporters, the Foundation had a record-breaking fiscal year for 2024-2025, raising nearly \$1.16 million. From this, \$1.092 million was invested directly into key HCA projects that enhance conservation areas, programs, and visitor experiences throughout the watershed.

Donor support helped advance several impactful initiatives, including:

- Continued construction and progress of the Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Project.
- Hands-on learning opportunities for 4,623 local students through the Outdoor Environmental Education program.
- The Basadinaa Experience, a new Indigenous-led trail signage journey located in the Dundas Valley Conservation Area.
- Capital improvements enhancing visitor experiences, such as the new accessible fishing platform at Fifty Point Conservation Area, as well as the new lookout tower that is currently under construction at Valens Lake Conservation Area.
- Supporting invasive species mapping across the City of Hamilton for the Natural Areas Inventory project, and early detection efforts for the Woolly Adelgid, which was recently identified in the Dundas Valley Conservation Area.
- Native tree planting at the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area that builds on HCA’s invasive species management efforts completed earlier in the year and supports long-term restoration plans.

Thank you. This year’s achievements reflect the collective impact of our donors, volunteers, and community partners. We are deeply grateful for their continued support and commitment to preserving Hamilton’s natural spaces for future generations.



**Hamilton
Conservation
Authority**

A Healthy Watershed for Everyone

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Report to: Board of Directors

Approved for Circulation By: Lisa Burnside, CAO

Reviewed By: T. Scott Peck, MCIP, RPP, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer / Director, Watershed Management Services

Prepared By: Jonathan Bastien, P. Eng., Manager, Water Resources Engineering

Meeting Date: April 2, 2026

Subject: Request for Proposal – Bidder Results – Dundas Valley Creeks Floodplain Mapping Study

Recommendation:

THAT the Board of Directors approve the proposal for the Dundas Valley Creeks Floodplain Mapping Study submitted by D.M. Wills Associates Limited, at an adjusted cost not to exceed \$137,050 (not including HST); and further

THAT the Board approve the use of Watershed Management Services reserve funds and, if required, HCA General Stabilization reserves to fund project costs exceeding the approved \$50,000 capital budget allocation, with any funding secured through the Flood Hazard Identification and Mapping Program anticipated to reduce the amount drawn from reserves.

Executive Summary:

The HCA Strategic Plan 2025-2029, under the Water Resources Management Priority area highlights the following initiative.

- Advance the implementation of our floodplain mapping program within our watershed to better understand flood risks and direct development away from natural hazards.

In this regard, the Dundas Valley Creeks Floodplain Mapping Study is to be completed in 2026 and undertaken by an external consultant. This study will provide up-to-date flood plain mapping for key reaches of Ancaster, Sulphur, Tiffany, Spring and Ann Street Creeks.

A Request for Proposal for the Dundas Valley Creeks Floodplain Mapping Study was developed and a call for proposals issued. Six proposals were submitted. It is recommended that this project be awarded to D.M. Wills Associates Limited for an adjusted amount not exceeding \$137,050 (not including HST).

This amount includes a provisional \$50,000 for field survey work, to obtain watercourse cross-sections and crossing structure details, which are essential inputs into the modelling and mapping. The level of effort of field survey is uncertain at this time and is highly dependant on the amount of reliable information available, which can only be fully determined by the consultant during the study. As such, proponents were directed through the proposal process to provide an estimate of the maximum proposed field survey budget as a provisional item within their proposals. The \$50,000 provisional amount represents the high-end of the received estimates.

Staff Comment / Discussion:

A Request for Proposal for the Dundas Valley Creeks Floodplain Mapping Study was developed and a call for proposals issued. Six proposals were submitted as follows:

Consultant	Adjusted Budget (not including HST)
Aquafor Beech	\$149,090
Concept Dash	\$220,380
DM Wills	\$137,050
GeoProcess	\$147,450
KGS	\$228,804
Water's Edge	\$167,154

To ensure fairness of budget comparisons, the above adjusted budget amounts include the provisional \$50,000 for field survey work, as well as the proposed budgets for climate change related analysis and public consultation.

Based on review by engineering staff of the proposals submitted, it is recommended that this project be awarded to D.M. Wills Associates Limited for an adjusted amount not exceeding \$137,050 (not including HST), for the following reasons:

- The proposal has the lowest adjusted budget.
- The proposal provides a clear and detailed scope of work which meets the requirements of the request for proposal

- The project team has significant experience conducting floodplain mapping projects, specifically for conservation authorities. Also, the key engineer responsible for the essential technical assessments previously completed similar work for HCA as part of the Stoney & Battlefield Creeks Flood Plain Mapping Study.

Strategic Plan Linkage:

The initiative refers directly to the HCA Strategic Plan 2025 – 2029:

- **Water Resources Management**
 - Advance the implementation of our floodplain mapping program within our watershed to better understand flood risks and direct development away from natural hazards.

Agency Comments:

N/A.

Legal / Financial Implications:

The 2026 Capital Budget includes an approved allocation of \$50,000 toward this floodplain mapping initiative. The additional \$87,000 will be funded through available Watershed Management Services reserve funds designated for floodplain mapping (approximately \$60,000), with any remaining balance, funded through HCA General Stabilization reserves.

It is noted that staff will also be submitting a funding application to the Flood Hazard Identification and Mapping Program (FHIMP) through Natural Resources Canada, which provides up to 50% cost-sharing for eligible floodplain mapping projects. HCA has been successful in securing this funding in the past. If the application is approved, the grant funding would be applied to the project costs and would reduce the amount required from reserve funds.

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Report to: Board of Directors

Approved for Circulation By: Lisa Burnside, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

Reviewed & Prepared By: T. Scott Peck, MCIP, RPP, Deputy CAO/Director, Watershed Management Services

Meeting Date: April 2, 2026

Subject: Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Project – SC-5, Stage 4 Archaeological Assessment Request for Proposal

Recommendation:

THAT the Board of Directors approve the quote submitted by Archaeological Research Associates to complete the required Stage 4 Archaeological Assessment for the SC-5 Wetland for an upset limit of \$1,930,475.00 excluding HST

Executive Summary:

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was published on March 3, 2026, requesting submissions to complete the required Stage 4 Archaeological Assessment for SC-5 (Punchbowl wetland). The RFP required costs for the 4 sites located within the wetland area and requested a cost for the site outside of the wetland area as a provisional item to be considered based on cost.

A total of 4 submissions were provided by the closing date of March 24, 2026. While the recommended proposal is not the lowest cost, based on a review of the costs, staff are recommending the project be awarded to Archaeological Research Associates for an upset limit of \$1,930,475.00 excluding HST. The recommended submission reflects the most cost-efficient approach when considering the number of crew days required to complete the work and provides greater confidence that the work can be completed within the anticipated schedule.

Staff Comment / Discussion:

As part of the design work for SC-5 (Punchbowl lands), Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 Archaeological Assessments have been completed. The results of the completed Stage 3 Archaeological Assessment identified 5 sites that met the criteria for a Stage 4 Archaeological Assessment. One of the sites is located along the western extent of the property outside of the proposed wetland while the remaining 4 sites are located within the proposed wetland area.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was published on March 3, 2026, requesting submissions to complete the required Stage 4 Archaeological Assessment.

A total of 4 submissions were provided by the closing date of March 24, 2026 at 4pm and the submissions are highlighted in the following chart. Costs exclude HST.

Consulting Firm	4 Sites	Provisional Site 1	Total
Archaeological Research Associates	\$1,930,475.00	\$998,975.00	\$2,929,450.00
Stantec Consulting	\$1,514,992.50	\$821,807.50	\$2,336,800.00
PHC	\$2,129,115.00	\$1,262,190.00	\$3,391,305.00
WSP E & I Ltd.	\$1,890,291.00	\$720,035.00	\$2,610,326.00

The request for proposal outlined that out of the 5 sites recommended for a Stage 4 Archaeological Assessment, 1 of the sites is located outside of the proposed wetland area and was identified as a provisional item that would be considered subject to cost. Excavations in the western area outside of the wetland will not be required and the proposed development in this area is being designed to avoid and protect this site. It is staff's opinion that given the cost to complete a Stage 4 assessment for this site and that the proposed development in this area is being designed to avoid and protect this site, it is prudent not to proceed with a Stage 4 for this site. As such, the recommended submission will not include the provisional work. Avoidance of the site is an accepted archaeological practice and allows the project to proceed without incurring additional archaeological costs where protection measures can be implemented through design.

The recommended submission is not the lowest cost proposal. It is noted that the Request for Proposal specifically notes that "the lowest or any proposal will not necessarily be accepted". Because proponents proposed different staffing levels, crew sizes, and durations to complete the Stage 4 work, staff undertook a comparison of submissions based on total level of effort required to complete the work. This approach allows for a balanced assessment of overall cost efficiency rather than relying solely on total price. The following rationale is provided for staff recommending the Archaeological Research Associates submission.

- Each of the submissions provides different numbers of days worked and crew members required to complete the project.
- The low quote as an example outlines that 63 days using 20 crew members per day is required to complete the project.
- The recommended quote outlines that 160 days using 10 to 20 crew members per day is required to complete the project
- The duration of Stage 4 archaeological assessments can vary depending on artifact density, soil conditions, documentation requirements, and the need to ensure that all cultural heritage resources are appropriately excavated and recorded in accordance with provincial standards. Based on staff experience with comparable projects, additional time beyond the minimum estimate is often required to complete the work in full compliance with regulatory requirements.
- In this regard, there is a key site that includes a relatively large campsite that has been used for manufacture and maintenance of tools on multiple occasions. This is in addition to 2 sites that have also been used for campsites that has been used for manufacture and maintenance of tools. There are also features found on one site that contain Euro-Canadian components. These sites require detailed review as part of the Stage 4 Archaeological Assessment.
- The low quote is in the amount of \$1,514,992.50 with the recommended quote in the amount of \$1,930,475.00. The difference between the 2 quotes is \$415,482.50.
- To provide a normalized comparison of the submissions, the crew member unit cost per day was calculated by dividing the total cost by the total number of workdays and crew members proposed. With this approach, the recommended consultant crew member cost per day is \$742.49 versus the low quote of \$1,202.38. On this basis, the recommended quote represents the lowest cost.
- The low quote represents the lowest field workdays proposed, and it is expected that additional time would be required to complete the project.
- The balanced approach to reviewing the costs indicates that the recommended consultant represents the most cost-efficient proposal.

Based on our experience with SC-8 and SC-5, the timing outlined in the recommended submission best reflects the required work in the field. The Archaeological Research Associates submission fully meets the requirements of the Request for Proposal and provides a fulsome and detailed proposal for the full extent of the required work. Further, Archaeological Research Associates completed the Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 Archaeological Assessments for SC-5 and is therefore familiar with the site and the overall Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Project. Continuity of the archaeological consultant reduces project risk by leveraging existing knowledge of site conditions, previous findings, and field logistics, which supports efficiency and confidence in the proposed schedule.

It is noted that once the Stage 4 assessment is complete, no further archaeological work will be required, and the HCA can proceed to finalize the proposed design and move to undertake construction. Construction is anticipated to commence in 2027.

Engagement with First Nations will be undertaken as part of Stage 4 Archaeological Assessments. For previous work at BC-1, SC-8 and SC-5, the HCA have engaged with First Nations communities and had them on site to monitor the archaeological work being undertaken. This monitoring work does require payment to the respective First Nation communities to cover their time and mileage costs and will be in addition to the archaeological consulting services recommended in this report, consistent with past practice.

The recommended upset limit represents the maximum potential cost of the work, and payments will be based on actual work completed in accordance with the contract. Should field conditions require less effort than anticipated, total project costs may be lower than the upset limit.

The Stage 4 work noted in this report is required to finalize this project and undertake construction of the wetland in 2027. Archaeological Research Associates Ltd., is qualified to undertake this work and has demonstrated their effectiveness and efficiency on the Stage 1, 2 and 3 assessments completed for SC-5, providing continuity and confidence in the proposed approach and schedule.

Strategic Plan Linkage:

The initiative refers directly to the HCA Strategic Plan 2025 – 2029:

- **Strategic Priority Area – Natural Heritage Conservation**
 - Initiatives – Advance progress on the Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Project and promote its objective and benefits

Agency Comments:

N/A

Legal / Financial Implications:

The Stage 4 Archaeological Assessment will be funded through the Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Project Restoration Reserve account. Staff are also pursuing outside funding sources for this project.

Memorandum to: Board of Directors

Approved for Circulation By: Lisa Burnside, CAO

Reviewed By: T. Scott Peck, MCIP, RPP, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer / Director, Watershed Management Services

Prepared By: Jonathan Bastien, P. Eng., Manager, Water Resources Engineering

Meeting Date: April 2nd, 2026

Subject: Watershed Conditions Memorandum

Executive Summary:

During the period of February 23rd to March 23rd, 2026, there were no significant watercourse flooding events, and no Lake Ontario shoreline flooding events. However, one longer period of rain and snowmelt (March 4th to 18th) warranted issuing messages and additional monitoring of watercourse conditions. There were no received observations, reports, or expectations of significant watercourse flooding. However, although no reports were received, it is expected that localized watercourse flooding of low-lying areas that typically flood during higher water levels and significant water safety concerns occurred in Spencer Creek.

There are no observations, reports, or expectations that significant watercourse flooding, localized watercourse flooding of low-lying areas that typically flood during higher water levels, or significant water safety concerns are occurring at this time. Current flows are estimated to range from slightly elevated above baseflow conditions in some watercourses to near thresholds for significant water safety concerns in other watercourses.

In December, January, February, and March, ice conditions artificially affected readings at the streamflow gauges, thus average monthly flows are not considered accurate. November average recorded flows ranged between significantly below long-term averages to near long-term averages.

There are no observations, reports, or expectations that significant Lake Ontario shoreline flooding is occurring at this time. The Lake Ontario mean daily water level averaged across the entire lake is 9 cm above average for this time of year, as of yesterday.

Christie Lake and Valens Lake levels are currently well above preferred winter operating levels but below preferred summer operating levels.

The most recent drought assessment indicated that normal conditions are an appropriate overall characterization of the watershed at this time.

There are currently no significant rainfall or snowmelt events (+20 mm in a day) forecasted for the watershed over the next 2 weeks.

There are currently no significant Lake Ontario shoreline flooding events forecasted over the next 2 weeks. HCA staff continue to monitor conditions and forecasts routinely.

HCA staff will continue to undertake monthly drought assessments, and coordinate with the Hamilton Low Water Response Team if drought conditions warrant actions.

Staff Comment / Discussion:

CURRENT WATERSHED CONDITIONS – March 23rd, 2026

Current Flows in Major Area Watercourses

There are no observations, reports, or expectations that significant watercourse flooding, localized watercourse flooding of low-lying areas that typically flood during higher water levels, or significant water safety concerns are occurring at this time.

Current flows are estimated to range from slightly elevated above baseflow conditions in some watercourses to near thresholds for significant water safety concerns in other watercourses. The five available streamflow gauges are Upper Spencer Creek at Safari Road, Middle Spencer Creek at Highway 5, Lower Spencer Creek at Market Street, Ancaster Creek at Wilson Street and Red Hill Creek at Barton Street.

In December, January, February, and March, ice conditions artificially affected readings at the streamflow gauges, thus average monthly flows are not considered accurate.

November average recorded flows ranged between significantly below long-term averages to near long-term averages. Monthly flow in Upper Spencer Creek at Safari Road was considered near average. However, Upper Spencer Creek at Safari Road gauge may have been experiencing debris related issues that artificially elevating recorded flows. Monthly flow in Middle Spencer Creek at Highway 5 was considered significantly below average. Monthly flow in Lower Spencer Creek at Market Street was considered significantly below average. Monthly flow in Ancaster Creek at Wilson Street was considered below average. Monthly flow in Red Hill Creek at Barton Street was considered well below average. It is noted that streamflows in Spencer Creek were increased during November as a result of the winter drawdowns of the Valens Lake reservoir (October 20 to November 6) and the Christie Lake reservoir (October 24 to December 3).

Current Lake Ontario Water Levels

There are no observations, reports, or expectations that significant Lake Ontario shoreline flooding is occurring at this time. The Lake Ontario mean daily water level in the Hamilton area ranged between 74.79 and 74.81 m IGLD85 as of yesterday. The Lake Ontario mean daily water level averaged across the entire lake (74.78 m IGLD85 as of yesterday) is 9 cm above average for this time of year.

Current Storages in HCA Reservoirs

Christie Lake levels (766.41 ft) are currently well above preferred winter operating levels (765.30 to 765.80 ft) but well below preferred summer operating levels (771.00 to 771.50 ft).

Valens Lake levels (274.90 m) are currently well above preferred winter operating levels (274.15 to 274.40 m) but below preferred summer operating levels (275.25 to 275.45 m).

Current Soil Conditions

Surface and root-zone soils are expected to be wet to saturated, and fully thawed, across the watershed.

RECENT STORM EVENTS

During the period of February 23rd to March 23rd, 2026, there were no significant watercourse flooding events, and no Lake Ontario shoreline flooding events.

However, one longer period of rain and snowmelt warranted issuing messages and additional monitoring of watercourse conditions.

Potential for Watercourse Flooding During Rain and Snowmelt

March 4th to 18th, 2026

On March 4th, the forecasts for March 4th to 8th expected 0 to 52 mm of total snowmelt, varying across the HCA watershed. In addition, 11 to 42 mm of total rain was anticipated for the watershed. And then on March 9th, the forecasts for March 10th to 11th expected 19 to 47 mm of total rain for the watershed, with an additional 5 to 10 mm possible if thunderstorms occurred. And then on March 13th, the forecasts for March 13th to 16th expected 15 to 30 mm of total rain and snowmelt for the watershed. There was considerable uncertainty as to the amount of runoff that would occur. HCA staff continued to monitor watercourse and weather conditions closely and reassessed the potential for flooding.

The recorded amount of total precipitation at the HCA gauges located across the watershed ranged between 10 and 52 mm for the period of March 4th to 16th. The

estimated amount of total snowmelt across the HCA watershed ranged between 19 and 72 mm for this same period.

There were no received observations, reports, or expectations of significant watercourse flooding. However, although no reports were received, it is expected that localized watercourse flooding of low-lying areas that typically flood during higher water levels and significant water safety concerns occurred in Spencer Creek.

HCA engineering staff issued the following messages related to this event, to communicate the potential watercourse flooding and water safety concerns to the community:

- March 4th: Flood Watch – Inland Lake and River Flooding
- March 9th: Flood Watch – Inland Lake and River Flooding
- March 13th: Watershed Conditions Statement Water Safety – Inland Lake and River Flooding
- March 18th: Cancellation of Watershed Conditions Statement Water Safety– Inland Lake and River Flooding

RECENT WATERSHED LOW WATER CONDITIONS

The most recent drought assessment (including data up to February 28) indicated that normal conditions are an appropriate overall characterization of the watershed at this time.

FORECASTED WATERSHED CONDITIONS

Watercourse Flooding

There are currently no significant rainfall or snowmelt events (+20 mm in a day) forecasted for the watershed over the next 2 weeks. HCA staff continue to monitor conditions and forecasts routinely. Resultant water levels and flows from currently anticipated rain or snowmelt are not expected to result in significant watercourse flooding.

Lake Ontario Shoreline Flooding

There are currently no significant Lake Ontario shoreline flooding events forecasted over the next 2 weeks. HCA staff continue to monitor conditions and forecasts routinely.

Watershed Low Water Conditions

HCA staff will continue to undertake monthly drought assessments, and coordinate with the Hamilton Low Water Response Team if drought conditions warrant actions.



Memorandum to: Board of Directors

Approved for Circulation By: Lisa Burnside, CAO

Reviewed By: Gord Costie, Director, Conservation Area Services

Prepared By: Liam Fletcher, Senior Manager, Conservation Area Services

Meeting Date: Thursday April 2, 2026

Subject: Conservation Area Services Update

Executive Summary:

Hamilton Conservation Authority conservation areas are preparing to reopen for the spring season through coordinated efforts across departments, including equipment transitions, site repairs, and activation of seasonal amenities. All major areas will be open for the Easter weekend, with increased visitation anticipated.

City of Hamilton Special Enforcement Areas on designated municipal roadways are in effect from March 15 to November 15.

Targeted sections of Dundas Valley Conservation Area will be temporarily closed to support the annual Jefferson Salamander migration and protect sensitive habitats.

Staff Comment / Discussion:

- **Conservation Areas Reopening** – After a long, cold and snowy winter, all of our areas will be preparing for the upcoming season. Reopening our areas is a collective effort across all of our departments. HCA Fleet Services division is busy transitioning away from snow removal equipment and preparing our turf equipment. The Capital and Strategic Services division will be busy making repairs and turning on utilities to our seasonal washrooms, campgrounds and pavilions in addition to the many other great projects on the go.
- **Easter Weekend** – All of our major conservation areas and parking lots will be open and welcoming visitors over the long weekend. With warmer

temperatures on the way, we are anticipating an increase to visitation during the holiday weekend. Staff will continue to work closely with Municipal Parking Enforcement to monitor and report on visitation. The Special Enforcement Areas are now in effect from March 15 until November 15.

- **Dundas Valley Conservation Area** – Specific sections within the Dundas Valley Conservation area will be temporarily closed for Jefferson Salamander migration. This seasonal closure is in collaboration with Watershed Management Services to promote healthy habitats and support species at risk.
- **Summer Employment** – Recruitment for the 2026 operating season is underway. Conservation Area Services hires more than 250 seasonal staff annually to support operations across the watershed. Current opportunities are posted on the Hamilton Conservation Authority website.