

Watershed Watch Newsletter



**KAWARTHA
CONSERVATION**

Water Fund Applications Open January 28

Since 2008, the Water Fund has provided grants, expertise, and technical support to landowners and community organizations in Kawartha Lakes and Durham Region for projects that enhance water quality and ecosystem health. With over \$700,000 awarded to landowners and \$47,000 to community initiatives since 2019, the fund supports regional environmental sustainability. Watershed residents are encouraged to apply and make a difference. Subscribe to Farm and Landowner Information for updates and funding opportunities.

[Subscribe Now](#)



Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy

The Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy, recently approved by the board during their November meeting, reviews Kawartha Conservation's programs and services to ensure their effectiveness. As required by the Province of Ontario, it outlines actions to address risks while considering watershed challenges, trends, and insights from community engagement. Learn more at the link below.

[Resource Management
Strategy](#)



Acting Watershed Resource Technician, Nathan Rajevski performing routine water quality monitoring

January 2025 / Vol 10

As 2024 comes to an end, I find myself reflecting on what has been an incredible first year creating the Watershed Watch newsletter with Kawartha Conservation. This journey has been such a privilege, bringing together the inspiring work of our team and sharing it with you, our community. Each edition has been a chance to highlight the passion and dedication that drives our mission to protect and preserve the natural beauty of our watershed.

I'm incredibly grateful for the unwavering support and hard work of our team, and I look forward to what we'll create together in 2025.

As we step into the new year, I'm filled with excitement for what's ahead. We have so many innovative projects and meaningful initiatives planned, and I can't wait to share them with you. One of our key goals for 2025 is to deepen our connection with you, our readers.

By sharing more stories from our

community partners and expanding the reach of environmental news and successes, we aim to keep you informed, inspired, and engaged.

To our wonderful subscribers, thank you for making this inaugural year of Watershed Watch so rewarding. Your feedback, enthusiasm, and ongoing support have made all the difference. It's been an absolute joy to bring this newsletter to you, and we're thrilled to have you with us on this journey.

Looking to 2025, I'm filled with optimism and anticipation. Together, we'll continue to champion conservation efforts, forge stronger community partnerships, and celebrate the beauty and resilience of our watershed. Here's to another amazing year of growth, learning, and achievement.

Thank you for being a part of Watershed Watch. From all of us at Kawartha Conservation, we wish you a wonderful holiday season and a happy, healthy New Year!

- Carolyn Snider, Community Engagement Technician



Spring Water Fund site visits conducted by Kawartha Conservation's Stewardship staff.

Our Year in Review: Celebrating Our 2024 Achievements

As we say goodbye to 2024, we take this opportunity to reflect on a year of remarkable achievements and meaningful progress in our mission to protect and enhance the health of our watershed. This year brought challenges, growth, and significant advancements across our goals and initiatives. Thanks to the dedication of our team, community partners, and volunteers, Kawartha Conservation has made tremendous strides in conservation efforts, environmental programs, and community engagement.

From improving natural spaces to supporting educational initiatives, we've witnessed the tangible impact of our work on both the environment and local communities.

Before we turn our focus to the opportunities ahead in 2025, let's celebrate some of the key accomplishments from this past year.



50 Million Tree planting program



Spring Native Plant Sale



LID Rain Garden at Kawartha Conservation



TD Tree Day planting project.



Talbot River Sub-watershed

Stewardship Success

In 2024, the Landowner and Community Stewardship team connected with over 130 landowners and community organizations, supporting innovative urban, rural, agricultural, and waterfront projects throughout the watershed. These collaborations surpassed expectations, launching new initiatives that strengthened the relationship between people and nature.

Through our programs, we exceeded the annual Stewardship Strategy target of planting 21,000 native trees and shrubs, achieving an extraordinary 59,095. This milestone enhances ecosystem restoration, biodiversity, and water quality across the watershed.

Our Native Plant Sale program also expanded this year, distributing 3,400 native plants to 100 landowners. These plants are revitalizing biodiversity, creating essential pollinator habitats, and building a connected network of naturalized landscapes across the region.

With the Water Fund, we awarded \$90,000 in grants to 29 landowners and six community organizations, leveraging an additional \$300,000 in community contributions. Each project aligns with Lake Management plans, delivering tangible improvements to environmental health across the watershed.

Funding from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness enabled the Talbot River Healthy Environment Initiative, developing water monitoring programs on nine agricultural and rural properties. This critical water quality data will shape agricultural Best Management Practices in 2025.

Through a partnership with RBC Tech for Nature, we launched a Low Impact Development (LID) project showcasing innovative stormwater management techniques, including a rain garden, soak-away pit, dry swale, permeable pathway, rain barrels, and native plant beds—all designed to mitigate stormwater runoff while protecting parks and infrastructure from flooding and erosion.

Thanks to the dedication of our team, community partners, and supporters, 2024 has been a year of exceptional progress in stewardship and environmental innovation.



Lake Dalrymple water quality sampling.



Precipitation monitoring station at Ken Reid Conservation Area.



Lake Dalrymple working group



Community Science Monitoring program.

Advancing Lake Management

In 2024, the Integrated Watershed Management team made significant strides in advancing environmental stewardship and sustainable watershed management.

A key initiative, Kawartha Conservation's Community Science Program, continued to thrive as a volunteer-driven effort to collect nearshore water data from Kawartha Lakes. Building on the success of the Nearshore Program, which ran from 2019 to 2021, the program now focuses on Balsam, Cameron, Sturgeon, and Pigeon Lakes. Thirteen dedicated volunteers collected water samples from their properties, providing valuable insights into the health of these lakes and the impact of human activity on their ecosystems. The data collected helps identify environmental stressors such as pollution from nearby sources and malfunctioning septic systems, enabling prompt action to address threats to the lakes' ecosystems. The program not only provides crucial information but also fosters a sense of stewardship among local residents, encouraging active participation in preserving these vital natural resources.

In 2024, the upgrade of the precipitation monitoring station at Ken Reid Conservation Area to a real-time weather station was completed successfully. This new station enhances our ability to monitor atmospheric parameters, including precipitation, air temperature, humidity, wind speed, and atmospheric pressure. With hourly data transmission, the station supports flood forecasting and climate change programs, providing real-time insights into weather events that impact the watershed. This upgrade is an important step toward increasing the availability of real-time data for climate-related decision-making and improving our ability to manage the watershed's environmental challenges.

In addition to these efforts, the Lake Dalrymple Watershed Characterization Report and Management Plan were completed and board-endorsed in 2024. The Management Plan outlines 42 strategic actions to address critical priorities such as protecting fish populations, preserving habitats from development, rehabilitating shorelines, and enhancing public engagement around lake health. These initiatives are vital for maintaining the ecological integrity of the Lake Dalrymple watershed for years to come.

Events that Connected the Community

This year, we proudly hosted the inaugural World Migratory Bird Day event on May 11, which was a resounding success. The event brought together park goers of all ages, offering a range of engaging activities designed to celebrate and raise awareness about migratory birds.

Participants had the opportunity to take part in bird counts, where they helped track local bird populations, while experienced naturalists led guided hikes to observe and identify various bird species. In addition, workshops were held to teach visitors how to use the eBird app, a powerful tool for citizen science that helps monitor and conserve bird populations globally. The event provided a unique opportunity for community members to connect with nature and contribute to important conservation efforts.

This year also saw the return of our two most highly anticipated events, Kawartha Fall Fest and Christmas at Ken Reid, which attracted more than 1,600 visitors from near and far. These events provided a festive atmosphere for families to enjoy the beauty of the park during the changing seasons. Fall Fest featured a range of activities, including all day birds of prey shows, hands on demonstrations from Reptilia Zoo, and , a pick-your-own pumpkin patch, while Christmas at Ken Reid transformed the area into a winter wonderland with live performances, crafts, and visits with Santa.

Additionally, our Illuminated Forest made its much-anticipated return for a four-week period. This year, we unveiled a newly designed 1km walking loop, which was beautifully adorned with festive lights that lit up the forest and highlighted the area's natural beauty. The immersive experience continues to be a highlight of the holiday season, creating lasting memories for visitors of all ages.



Dawn Chorus at World Migratory Bird Day



Birds of Prey at Kawartha Fall Fest



Christmas at Ken Reid



Illuminated Forest



International Plowing Match and Rural Expo

This year marked our first time attending the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo, and it was an incredible experience! Held at the Lindsay Fairgrounds, this premier event drew over 51,000 attendees over five days, offering a unique platform to showcase our commitment to conservation, agriculture, and the natural beauty of Kawartha Lakes. The energy and passion from all our visitors were truly inspiring, underscoring the importance of environmental stewardship on such a grand scale.

In collaboration with the City of Kawartha Lakes, our team constructed a stunning water feature that became the centerpiece of our exhibit. Designed and built by our talented Conservation Areas Technicians - Calli Burke, Freddy Caveen, and Jackson Boyes - this interactive display captivated visitors throughout the event. It beautifully highlighted the synergy between natural elements and sustainable practices, providing an engaging visual experience while reinforcing our message of environmental care.

The week also allowed us to engage in meaningful conversations, provide hands-on demonstrations, and deepen our connections with the community. These interactions helped us strengthen partnerships and inspired collective action towards a greener future. We extend a heartfelt thank you to our dedicated volunteers, the City of Kawartha Lakes, and the event organizers for their tireless efforts in making this experience truly unforgettable. Together, we are planting the seeds for a sustainable tomorrow.

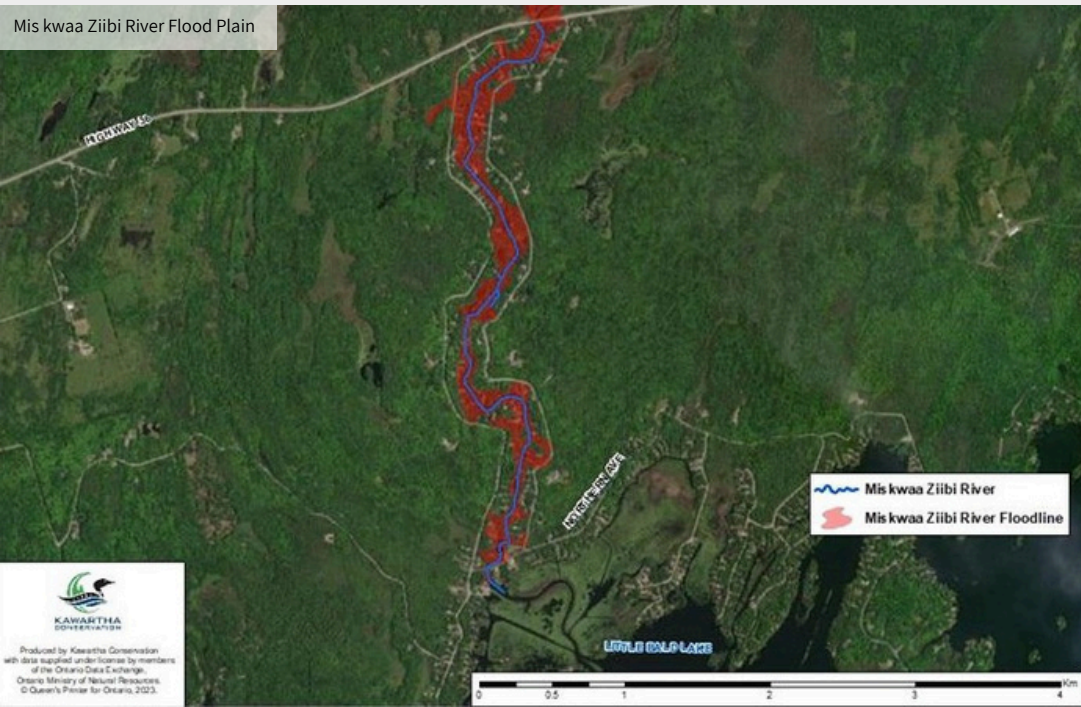
Nogies Creek Flood Plain



Flood Monitoring



Miskwaa Ziibi River Flood Plain



Flood Plain Studies

The flood plain mapping project for Nogies Creek and Miskwaa Ziibi River, initiated by Kawartha Conservation on behalf of the Municipality of Trent Lakes, was officially completed this year. This milestone represents a significant advancement in flood risk management for these priority flood-prone sub-watersheds. The updated mapping provides critical information to support safe development, guide emergency management plans, and enhance the Township’s capacity to address future growth. Utilizing advanced models and a new LiDAR dataset provided by the Province, the project delivers a more precise understanding of flood hazards than ever before.

Nogies Creek, a 200 km² watershed, flows through wetlands, forested areas, and developed regions before reaching Pigeon Lake. An earlier flood study completed in 1988 provided a foundation for understanding flood risks in the area, but the 2024 mapping extends further upstream and offers a more comprehensive view of potential flooding. Similarly, the Miskwaa Ziibi River watershed, also 200 km², spans diverse landscapes before emptying into Little Bald Lake. Unlike Nogies Creek, this area had no prior confirmed flood study, making the new mapping an essential tool for understanding and mitigating flood risks.

The updated flood plain mapping delineates hazard areas, promotes safe future development, and identifies areas of concern. The Nogies Creek flood line will be included in Kawartha Conservation’s updated regulatory mapping, while the Miskwaa Ziibi River flood line, being outside the organization’s jurisdiction, will serve as a critical planning resource for the Municipality of Trent Lakes. The maps, technical reports, and supporting documents are now publicly available on the Kawartha Conservation and Municipality of Trent Lakes websites.

Building on the success of this project, Kawartha Conservation is already preparing for the next major flood plain study, planned for 2025. More details about this upcoming initiative will be shared in the coming year as the organization continues its commitment to building resilient communities through innovative water management solutions.

Conservation Areas

2024 was a landmark year for the Conservation Areas Lands team, marked by dedication, collaboration, and impactful accomplishments. Central to this year's success was the completion of our Conservation Lands Strategy, a comprehensive framework ensuring the sustainable management and enhancement of our treasured conservation areas. Building on this milestone, we initiated a public survey to engage the community in shaping a new Conservation Areas Strategy, reflecting local values and guiding decisions for the future. Throughout the year, the team also achieved several key milestones:

- **Marsh Boardwalk Repairs:** Restored approximately 45 feet of the marsh boardwalk, improving accessibility and safety for visitors.
- **Pigeon Boardwalk Repairs:** Replaced over 60 broken or rotten boards, revitalizing this popular trail feature.
- **Invasive Species Management:** The annual garlic mustard pull brought together staff and volunteers to remove invasive garlic mustard at Ken Reid Conservation Area, preserving native biodiversity.
- **New Kiosk Installation:** Completed the installation of a brand-new kiosk at Ken Reid Conservation Area, featuring upgraded mapping to enhance the visitor experience.
- **Community Engagement and Events:** Our conservation areas became a hub for diverse activities, hosting a world-qualifying 24-hour ultra-trail racing event, weddings, scouting and educational groups, and more.
- **Partnership with City of Kawartha Lakes Boys and Girls Club:** Supported the club by organizing an Earth Day garbage clean-up and a Tree Planting event at Ken Reid Conservation Area, fostering environmental stewardship among youth.

These accomplishments highlight the dedication of our team and the community's shared commitment to protecting and enhancing our natural spaces. As we look ahead, the insights gained through community engagement will guide the next phase of our conservation journey. Together, we're ensuring these lands remain a source of beauty, inspiration, and connection for generations to come.



Annual Garlic Mustard Pull



Earth Day garbage clean up



Pigeon River Headwaters Conservation Area boardwalk repairs



New Ken Reid kiosk sign and map

As we close the chapter on 2024, we celebrate a year of collaboration, innovation, and unwavering commitment to the health and sustainability of our watershed. The milestones we achieved, supported by our dedicated staff, passionate volunteers, engaged community partners, and generous stakeholders, have laid a solid foundation for the next phase of our work. The many successes we achieved this year, whether restoring natural habitats, fostering environmental stewardship, or deepening scientific knowledge, demonstrate what is possible through collective action. Now, as we look ahead, we stand ready to build on this momentum and embark on an exciting new chapter in 2025.

In the year to come, Kawartha Conservation will focus on expanding its stewardship and restoration efforts. We anticipate planting over 67,500 trees across the watershed, a vital initiative to improve ecological health and sequester an estimated 395 tonnes of carbon. Alongside this, we will provide \$70,000 in landowner grants to support community-led water quality projects and restore 500 meters of stream banks, fostering resilient aquatic ecosystems. Enhanced educational outreach will engage more than 3,000 community members, empowering them to take meaningful action toward environmental sustainability.

We also look forward to significant improvements in our conservation areas. Planned projects include infrastructure upgrades, such as re-routing degraded trails and installing enhanced signage to create safe, enjoyable, and accessible spaces for visitors. Habitat restoration at Durham East Cross Forest and invasive species management at Fleetwood Creek Natural Area will further our efforts to protect biodiversity and vital habitats.

As we embark on these transformative projects, we extend our deepest gratitude to all who make this work possible. Your support is instrumental in our mission to protect, enhance, and celebrate the natural beauty of the Kawartha watershed. Together, we will ensure a legacy of thriving ecosystems and vibrant communities for generations to come.

- Carolyn Snider, Community Engagement Technician



Provincially Significant McLaren's Creek



Kawartha Conservation staff at the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo

For more information on how Kawartha Conservation can help.
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