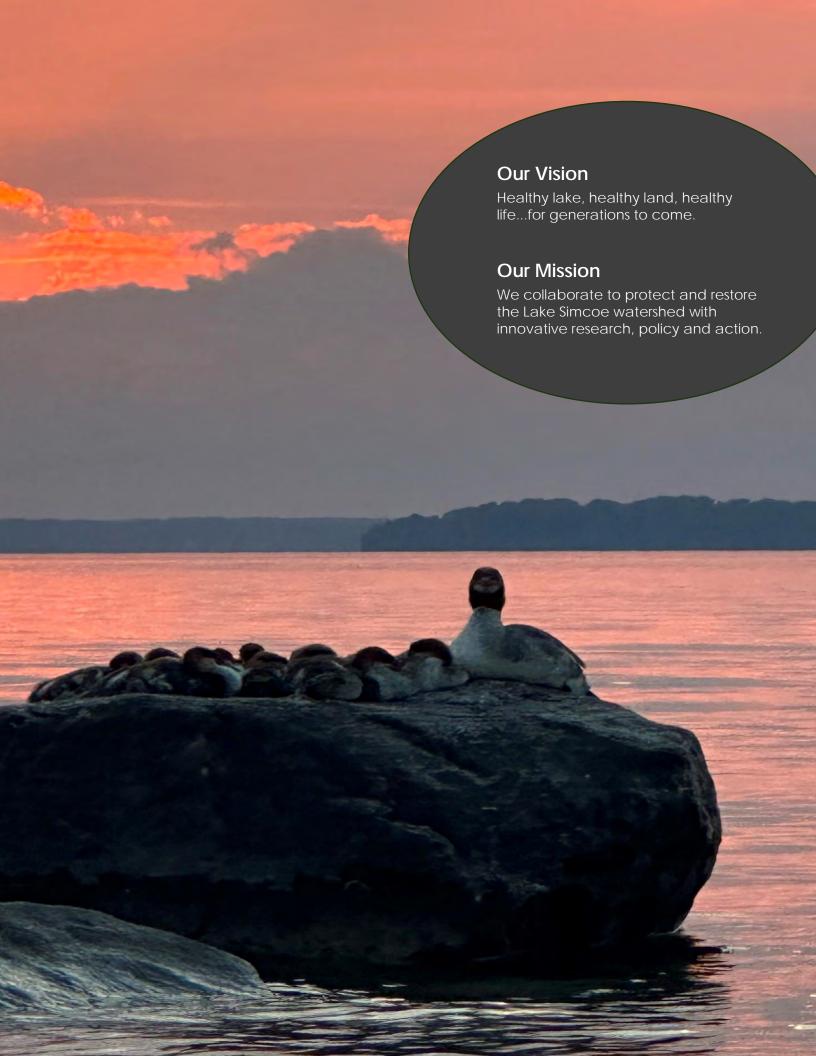


2024 Budget Companion



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A Bit About Us and the Watershed

The Lake Simcoe watershed, which is 3,400 square kilometres, sweeps across 20 municipalities, from the Oak Ridges Moraine in the south to the Oro Moraine in the north, through York and Durham Regions, Simcoe County and cities of Kawartha Lakes, Barrie, and Orillia.

The watershed has been inhabited and cared for by Indigenous Peoples since creation, and we recognize and thank the Williams Treaties First Nations, including the Chippewas of Georgina Island, Rama and Beausoleil and the Mississaugas of Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha, the Credit and Scugog Island, for their historic connection and unwavering care for this land and water.

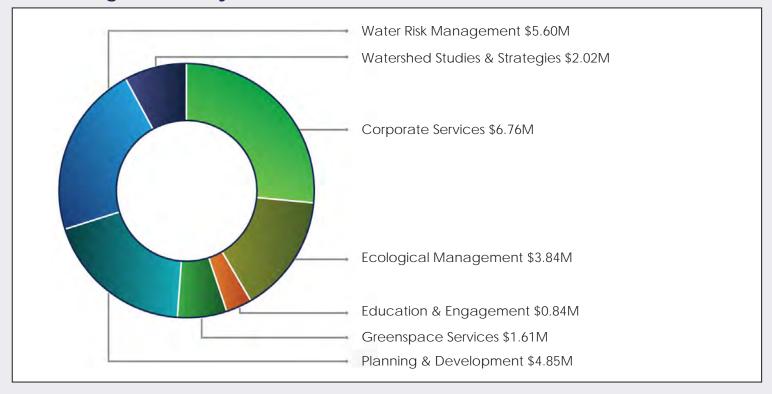
We are the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. We are a local watershed management organization incorporated under the province of Ontario's Conservation Authorities Act, and for over 70 years now, we have been focused on conservation, restoration, and management of this incredible ecological gem.

To deliver on our mandate and commitments, we employ over 100 full-time, part-time, contract and seasonal staff across numerous professional fields who provide expertise within the following seven service areas, which are detailed in the following pages:

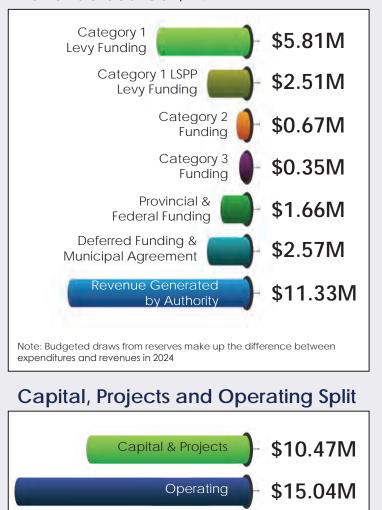
- Corporate Services
- **Ecological Management**
- **Education & Engagement**
- **Greenspace Services**
- Planning & Development Services
- Water Risk Management
- Watershed Studies & Strategies



2024 Budget Summary \$25.51M, Total FTEs 109.6



Revenue Source \$24.91M



Expenditure Type \$25.51M





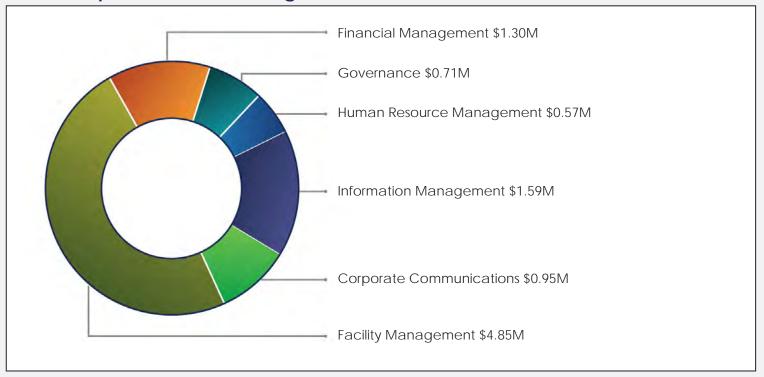
Corporate Services

Corporate Services provides leadership and management in the delivery of services central to the successful functioning of the entire organization. Corporate Services consists of the following program areas:

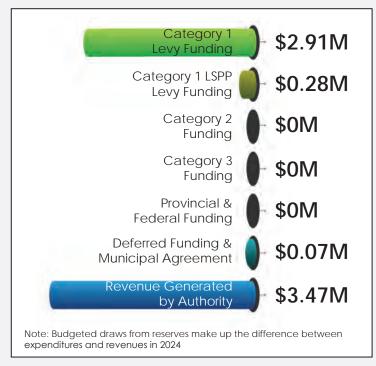
- **Corporate Communications**
- Facility Management
- Financial Management
- Governance
- **Human Resource Management**
- Information Management



2024 Corporate Services Budget \$6.76M, 32.7 FTEs



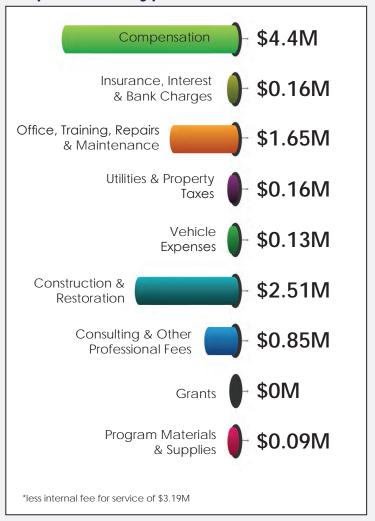
Revenue Source \$6.73M



Capital, Projects and Operating Split



Expenditure Type \$9.97M



2023 Achievements

- Provided input and communications expertise into the Subwatershed Plans online platform.
- Expanded the reach of the Do-It-Yourself seedling program, with a 34 % increase in community interest.
- Migrated our corporate website containing more than 500 pages to a new, fully accessible platform.
- Responded to several media requests, as well as monitored and tracked more than 100 media articles related to our watershed.

Fast Facts

- Achieved a 14 % growth in subscribers to our education programs and events contact lists.
- Presented 19 watershed residents with Conservation awards at our Conservation Awards Gala.

Corporate Communications

Corporate Communications and Engagement Services provides strategic communications and marketing oversight and delivers a broad range of initiatives to inform, inspire, influence, and motivate government partners, groups, and people of all ages across our communities to achieve a healthier watershed.

2024 Focus

- Lead the development and launch of the new strategic plan.
- Build on the momentum of our successful social media strategy to further engage with our audiences.
- Build and strengthen relationships with news media and continue to establish the Conservation Authority as the subject matter expert on environmental issues related to lake and watershed health.
- Collaborate on delivery of the Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy, Conservation Areas Strategy, and Subwatershed Plans platform.
- Continue to influence strategic and targeted communications to increase participation in and understanding of Conservation Authority programs and services.

Outlook

- Our reputation continues to gain positive momentum, with increasing interest and coverage by news media, growing social media reach, and impressive levels of engagement with our community partners, watershed residents, and all levels of government.
- Increased online activity and targeted communications and marketing, is leading to higher levels of social media followers and increased knowledge of our programs and services.

Service Pressures

- The news media landscape continues to evolve, as evidenced by the closure of several community newspapers and radio stations, and we are faced with challenges in reaching some of our target audiences.
- As a result, we are increasingly using social media to direct people to our online content to make them aware of the programs and services we offer.





Facility Management

Facility Management oversees the management of all assets (buildings and infrastructure, vehicles, and equipment). This includes purchases, leases, repairs, scheduled maintenance, licenses, insurance, utilities, and taxes.

2024 Focus

- Complete design and permitting stages for the development of the new Scanlon Creek Nature Centre and begin facility construction.
- Retrofit washrooms at Head Office to maintain assets, improve operations, and enhance professional appearance.
- Continue asset replacement program with wall painting at Head Office, and implementation of phase 2 of the office chair replacements.
- Install additional parking lot lights and security cameras at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area to enhance employee safety and infrastructure protection.
- Undertake parking lot, entrance, and landscape upgrades at Head Office to enhance professional appearance and meet accessibility requirements.
- Replace electrical power poles along the corridor servicing the Scanlon Creek Operations and Nature Centres to improve safety and reduce risk of service interruptions.
- Install high-quality audio and visual equipment in meeting rooms at Head Office and the Operations Centre.

Outlook

- Inflation, supply chain disruptions, and availability of materials is anticipated to continue to impact current and future maintenance and construction projects and green fleet vehicle replacements.
- Recent renovation of the Operations Centre and construction of a new Nature Centre will mean that asset management and maintenance focus will shift to the older Head Office.

Service Pressures

- Adapting facility and fleet vehicle service levels to meet new and evolving business delivery models, as well as employee health and safety requirements.
- Supply chains and market fluctuations continue to impact service and material costs, causing delays of up to six months for some scheduled projects and product deliveries.
- Ongoing maintenance of the existing Nature Centre is required to ensure the safe delivery of Education programs during the development of the new facility.

Fast Facts

 The Scanlon Creek Operations and Nature Centres are illuminated and heated using electricity, reducing the carbon footprint for these facilities. The new Scanlon Creek Nature Centre will also be powered using electricity and will be constructed and operated to be net-zero.

- Completed flat roof replacements at Head Office, protecting the building while increasing insulation and operating efficiency.
- Improved employee safety and facility security at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area through the installation of walkway, parking lot lighting, and security cameras.
- Began employee office chair asset replacement, completing phase 1 of 4.
- Cleared brush and trees along the entire length of the powerline servicing the Scanlon Creek Operations and Nature Centres to improve power supply and business operation continuity.



Financial Management

Financial Management is responsible for day-to-day financial operations such as payroll and accounts payable/receivable as well as budgeting, procurement, risk management, procured legal services, quarterly and annual financial reporting, records management, freedom of information requests/reporting, and reception services.

2024 Focus

- Ensure the 2024 Budget is approved at each funding municipality, using the new funding categories, and abiding by the new budget process set out by the province.
- Introduce a new Purchase Order module that will improve record keeping, accuracy at year-end, and enable improved forecasting.
- Continue work on our records management project, seeking Board approval of a policy and retention schedule, following a legal review completed in 2023.
- Continue to streamline and refine the budget process with funding municipalities for the 2025 Budget, leveraging our learnings from the first year of the new budget process.
- Make improvements to multi-year budgeting, enabling a better understanding of our longer term operating and capital needs, in line with municipal budgeting.

Outlook

- Significant fiscal restraints, new processes developed through remote work, and our drive for business excellence will continue to spur new program and process improvements.
- High Construction Price Index challenges our ability to accurately forecast costs in the capital budget.

Service Pressures

- Changes to the **Conservation Authorities** Act will change our future budgets starting in 2024, including how we request levy funding from our municipal funding partners.
- Increasing complexity of budget, forecasting, and financial reporting related to project accounting and additional grant submissions with limited staff capacity.

- Implemented new payment software to enable certain online payments for clients in various programs in efforts to improve client satisfaction and reduce staff time. The new payment software has resulted in \$10,000-15,000 savings.
- Streamlined staff's ability to work effectively in a "3-office" environment through the implementation of new electronic workflow processes related to purchase orders and expense claims processing.
- Transitioned to Bids and Tenders as the new procurement platform which will increase exposure to more vendors resulting in competitive bidding that will lead to better pricing. Electronic bidding will reduce paper usage, improve communication, and allow for better management of procurement records.
- Met with member municipalities to proactively discuss changes to the budget process, the introduction of mandatory Memorandums of Understanding, and answer any questions pertaining to the changes under the Conservation Authorities Act.

Governance

The Chief Administrative Officer provides expert knowledge, strategic advice, and recommendations to the Board of Directors on policy, program, and budget decisions. The Chief Administrative Officer also provides operational leadership to more than 100 staff to guide and influence processes, decisions, and implementation, to advance our mission.

2024 Focus

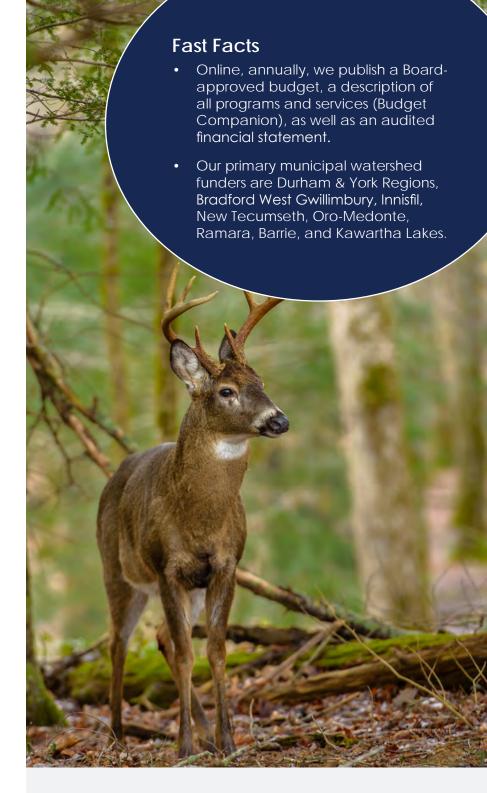
- Revise the current strategic plan and develop a reporting dashboard for implementation from 2025 onwards.
- Finalize all aspects of transition and ensure all legislated deliverables are completed as required in Bill 229 and supporting regulations.
- Implement all required changes with O.Reg.41/24 and amend Conservation Authority development guidelines and bylaws accordingly.

Outlook

- Conservation Authorities Act changes will change the structure, funding, and delivery of our programs and services for a stronger and more secure future.
- The federal government's commitment to improving the health of Lake Simcoe provides excellent funding and partnership opportunities for critical watershed restoration projects into the future.

Service Pressures

- Regulatory and mandated changes to Conservation Authority programs and services continue requiring ongoing implementation and engagement with core partners and public.
- Inflationary pressures, workforce changes, and ongoing response across all levels of government require constant attention and effective change management.



- Operationalized the changes and requirements of regulations under the Conservation Authorities Act ensuring compliance.
- Completed transfer of properties to the Town of Georgina.
- Continued as a member of the Conservation Ontario Board of Directors helping guide all conservation authorities.



Human Resource Management

Human Resources is responsible for the effective support and management of people in the organization through the provision of services such as recruitment and retention, health and safety, performance management, employee relations, learning and development, benefits and compensation design, and administration and policy development.

2024 Focus

- Begin implementing recommendations in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging framework.
- Continue to enhance our health and safety program through a partnership with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and their Health and Safety Excellence Program.
- Strengthen employee and leadership professional development and explore opportunities to increase collaboration internally and externally.
- Leverage technology to create efficiencies and enhance human resources, and health and safety workflow processes.

Outlook

Effective talent management practices are essential for attracting, motivating, engaging, developing, and retaining staff. Prioritizing succession planning and development opportunities is imperative to creating a resilient workforce, and to ensuring success and competitiveness as an employer.

Service Pressures

Ongoing changes to provincial environmental legislation challenges how we address employee concerns and provide support and guidance.

- Completed phase 1 of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Strategy, developing a framework with short and long-term recommendations to guide future policy and program development.
- Undertook an organizational review of all positions and completed a market evaluation of compensation to ensure competitiveness as well as our ability to attract and retain talent.

Information Management

Information Management is responsible for providing and managing secure, reliable, and integrated information technology solutions that align with our business and strategic goals while delivering excellence in client service for staff.

2024 Focus

- Assist Engineering and Regulations Teams to complete a major update to the hazard mapping regulations in accordance with new provincial legislation.
- Develop a new, and much more accurate, Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR)-based elevation surface for the entire Lake Simcoe watershed that will support floodplain mapping to better predict flooding events.
- Advance the work of our new Information Management Steering Committee to better guide our digital transformation of key business processes. This includes developing an updated corporate information management vision and a digital strategy.
- Continue to implement security measures to protect our systems and data from cyber attacks and improve backup and disaster recovery systems.
- Implement a cloud-based phone system, that will be integrated with Microsoft Teams and Microsoft 365, to replace the existing landline phone system.

Outlook

- Digitally transform our numerous business processes to improve efficiency and accessibility of information technology services.
- Increased digital workspaces will allow staff to effectively work from different locations and deliver quality customer service from any location.
- Make good use of Artificial Intelligence and avoid related security breaches.

Service Pressures

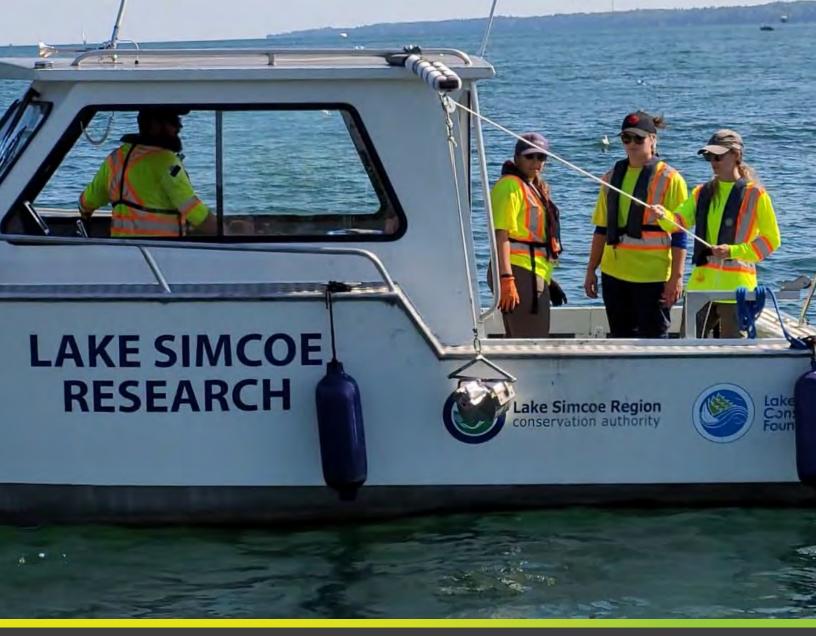
- Content management and records management is shifting business processes to digital formats leading to greater efficiency but creating change management challenges at the same time.
- Cyber security threats require us to balance costs while keeping our network running smoothly and protecting stored private data.
- Establishing a data and records management system is a critical and integral part of our digital transformation but will also involve change management challenges.

Fast Facts

- There are now more than 60 billion elevation points derived from LiDAR covering the Lake Simcoe watershed.
- More than 1 million spam emails attempt to infiltrate our email boxes each year.
- There were 1,600 datasets downloaded from the Open Data and Partner GIS data portal in 2023.

- Completed security
 assessment and added
 additional layers of
 security to our network to
 keep our data safer and
 reduce the risk of being
 compromised by the
 global hacking epidemic.
- Upgraded our regulations business application to help staff be more efficient in delivering customer services.
- Acquired new and more accurate elevation data to support improved floodplain mapping.
- Upgraded the Geographic Information System infrastructure software and hardware to allow faster access to our geographic information system.

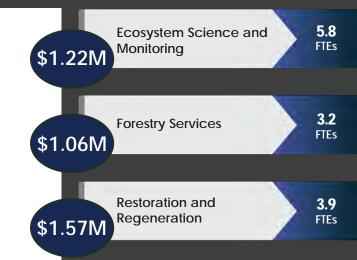




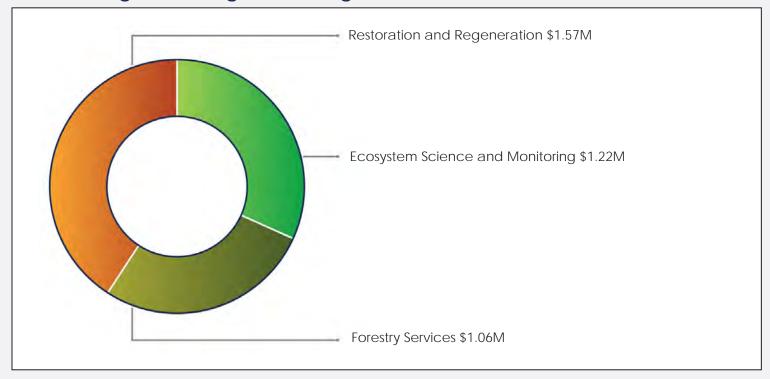
Ecological Management

The goal of Ecological Management is to manage natural heritage systems (forest, wetlands, lakes, rivers, etc.) within the watershed. We do this through monitoring, to understand the current state of our watershed, and then by identifying and implementing restoration projects. Ecological Management consists of the following program areas:

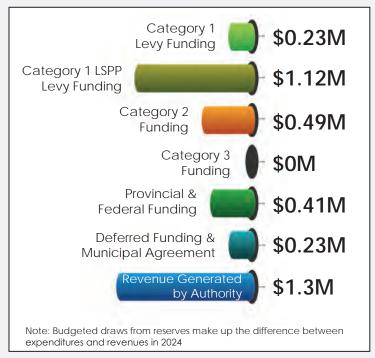
- **Ecosystem Science and Monitoring**
- **Forestry Services**
- Restoration and Regeneration



2024 Ecological Management Budget \$3.84M, 12.9 FTEs



Revenue Source \$3.79M



Capital, Projects and Operating Split



Expenditure Type \$3.84M



Fast Facts

- 2 peer-reviewed journal articles were published in 2023, about the invasive aquatic plant starry stonewort and the effects of winter salt on oxygen and nutrients in freshwater sediments.
- Fish population monitoring was conducted at 38 sites with 5,294 fish captured, counted, identified, weighed, and released.



- Collected invasive mussel samples from 715 sites throughout Lake Simcoe in efforts to study the role of mussels in the phosphorus loads and dissolved oxygen relationship.
- Completed calculation of phosphorus loads to Lake Simcoe for hydrologic years 2018 - 2020. The 2020 phosphorus load, at 58 tonnes, was one of the lowest recorded in the last 2 decades.
- Completed a fall sample collection of chemical contaminants in the water and sediment of Lake Simcoe and its tributaries. Sampling included contaminants such as heavy metals, hydrocarbons and pesticides, and emerging contaminants such as Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).
- Completed a year of enhanced water quality sampling of the Holland Marsh pump-off water collecting over 150 samples and calculating phosphorus load for the 2022 hydrologic year.
- Investigated the relationship between phosphorus loads and lake dissolved oxygen, through enhanced aquatic plant, invasive mussel, and water quality sampling.
- Continued collection of water quality samples at 22 stations and biologic monitoring at 38 sites.



Ecosystem Science and Monitoring

The Ecosystem Science and Monitoring program assesses the health of Lake Simcoe's nearshore zone, the status of fish and aquatic insect populations, and evaluates tributary water quality to support science-based management decisions.

2024 Focus

- Continue to investigate the phosphorus loads and dissolved oxygen relationship focusing on aquatic plants through a lake-wide plant survey.
- Conduct a second round of spring chemical contaminants sampling of water and sediment in watershed tributaries and Lake Simcoe.
- Continue to study changing nutrient cycling dynamics in Lake Simcoe through enhanced water quality sampling, aquatic plant sampling, and invasive mussel sampling.

Outlook

Monitoring data continues to be a critical component of watershed planning and management actions as climate change and invasive species impact the ecology of the Lake Simcoe watershed.

Service Pressures

Maintaining a robust ecosystem research program can only be supported through continued external funding such as Provincial Lake Simcoe Protection Plan support.



Forestry Services

The Forestry Services program aims to implement best forest management practices that contribute to watershed and community health.

2024 Focus

- Implement field data collection for urban forest studies in East Gwillimbury and Georgina, and final report preparation for Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville studies.
- Continue to implement afforestation program upgrades in response to changing climatic conditions, and building resilience to address shorter, unpredictable planting seasons, and shifts in suitable planting stock.
- Prepare a forest stand inventory for the new Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve to inform property master plan development.

Outlook

 External funding opportunities for landowner grants to support tree planting continue to be strong due to the significant focus on climate change impacts arising from various national and world events.

Service Pressures

- A Vulnerability Assessment for the York Regional Forest confirmed that the frequency of severe windstorms, torrential downpours, and ice storms will require dedicated resources to respond to clean-up.
- Climate change, invasive species, and diseases threaten forest health and canopy cover, requiring innovative approaches to planting and forest management.
- Competing land use pressures in the watershed, including agriculture, urban development, and other environmental issues will continue to present challenges for securing large areas for tree planting initiatives.

Fast Facts

- Planted more than 56,400 trees and shrubs on 62 sites, establishing over 25.7 hectares of new forest and canopy cover across the watershed, in partnership with private and public landowners and external funding partners.
- Sold 6,300 seedlings to over 60 landowners through our annual Do-It-Yourself Planting Program.
- Visited 365 sites across Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville and collected data from 3,500 trees. The information will allow us to calculate the ecosystem services they provide including carbon sequestration, stormwater runoff, and air pollution reduction, and building energyefficiency contributions. The results will aid the municipalities in decision-making and urban forest management.

- Completed field data collection for urban forest studies in Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville.
 Funded by York Region and the local municipalities, the studies will quantify tree and canopy cover, carbon sequestration and community benefits, and project change through time.
- Installed 25 leaf cluster bat habitat structures at Scanlon Creek, Rogers Reservoir, and Luck Conservation Areas.
- Updated and renewed the Durham Regional Forest Management Agreement with Durham Region for 6 properties in Uxbridge Township.
- Renewed partnerships with York Region and Forests Ontario to support continued delivery of tree planting services to increase natural heritage cover, address climate change impacts, and contribute to overall community health.

Restoration and Regeneration

The Restoration and Regeneration program implements natural heritage, agricultural best management practices, and watercourse restoration projects to enhance, restore, and create natural features to improve water quality, control water quantity, and infiltration within the watershed.

2024 Focus

- Continue to focus on reporting our projects using key performance indicators and other environmental benefits.
- Discover new opportunities to implement restoration projects with public and private landholders to achieve ecological gains.
- Conduct ongoing outreach with the agricultural community to secure commitments to implement restoration projects and environmental best management practices.

Outlook

Through the Ecological Offsetting program and upcoming government grants, we have exciting opportunities to deliver and support natural heritage restoration projects across the watershed.

Service Pressures

- Restoration projects take many years to implement and partner delays are unpredictable.
- Added pressures from the effects of climate change and severe weather events are everchanging and impact how projects should be implemented.

2023 Achievements

- Provided over 108 grants to private landowners and community groups through our Restoration Assistance program.
- Helped increase biodiversity and enhance pollinator habitat through 63% of the projects completed this year.
- Continued partnerships with our watershed partners to host community events, planting trees and shrubs, removing invasive species, and engaging community volunteers.

Fast Facts

- Farmers installing cover crops protected 981 hectares of farmland and will reduce 394.6 kg of phosphorus each year.
- Over 107 volunteers planted over 5,490 trees and shrubs.
- A large streambank erosion project was implemented at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area and improved 278 metres of streambank which will reduce phosphorus by 5.56 kg per year.







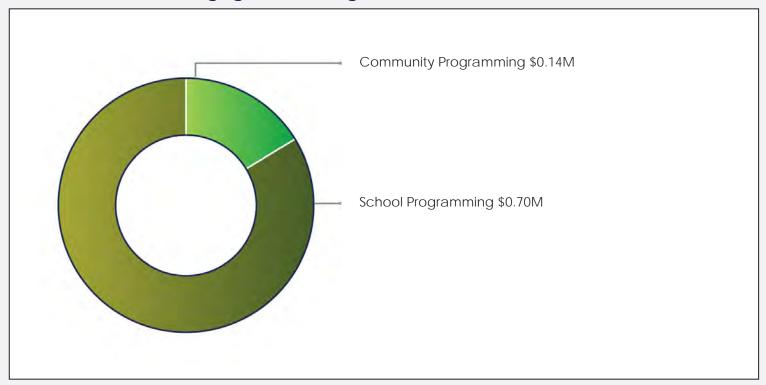
Education & Engagement

The purpose of Education and Engagement is to engage learners of all ages, interests and abilities through programmed learning experiences that raise awareness, impart knowledge, create understanding, and inspire action that leads to real and lasting change. Education and Engagement consists of the following program areas:

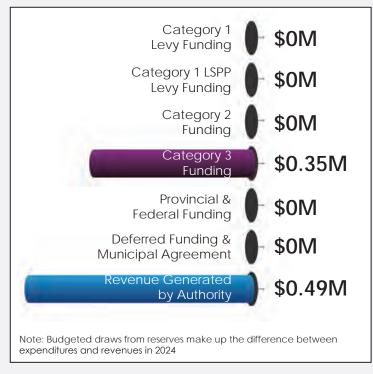
- Community Programming
- **School Programming**



2024 Education & Engagement Budget \$0.84M, 5.0 FTEs



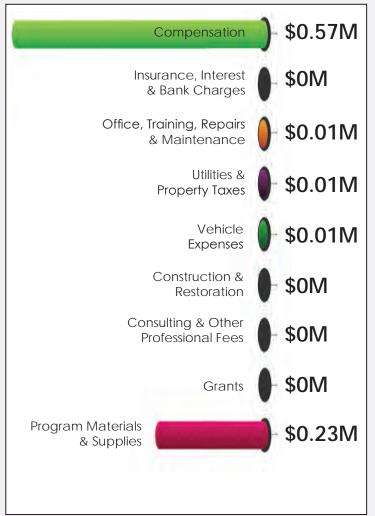
Revenue Source \$0.84M



Capital, Projects and Operating Split



Expenditure Type \$0.84M



Community Programming

Community programming provides unique learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults, thereby enhancing participants' connections to the health of the Lake Simcoe watershed.

2024 Focus

- Expand Forest School Summer Camp from 1 to 4 weeks in response to community demand.
- Forge new partnership with YMCA of Simcoe Muskoka for summer camp programming at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area.

Outlook

- Public interest in visiting our properties is translating into opportunities for new and re-envisioned community programs.
- New partnerships established with local businesses through fundraising initiatives for the new Nature Centre present exciting opportunities for community collaborations.

Service Pressures

Challenges in striking a balance between programs that are close to full cost recovery and accessible to everyone.

2023 Achievements

- Hosted members of Ontario Nature's Youth Council for a full-day of learning about climate change and wetlands as naturebased climate solutions.
- Offered, together with 10 community partners, fun outdoor programming for children and youth enrolled in various summer camps.
- Delivered Spring into Scanlon March Break Camp and Forest School Summer Camp with all spaces filled and waiting lists generated from overwhelming interest.

Fast Facts

- Engaged with 1,815 children, youth, and adults through various in-person and virtual community programs and events.
- Hosted an interactive booth with hands-on activities for children and their families during Empower Simcoe's EarlyON Community Picnic in Bradford.
- Debuted a new activity called 'Ice Fishing Frenzy' at the City of Barrie's Winterfest.



Fast Facts

- Nearly 13,500 student engagements through field trips, inperson schoolyard visits, and virtual program delivery.
- The Education team grew to 7 strong in 2023 through the addition of 3 new contract staff to meet operational demands.
- Delivered a session entitled 'Climate Change in the Lake Simcoe Watershed' at the Simcoe County District School Board's 'May the EcoForce Be With You' spring conference.

School Programming

School Programming provides provincial curriculumconnected, experiential, and engaging programs and services for students and teachers from kindergarten to Grade 12.

2024 Focus

- Launch 'Forests of the Future' program to provide new technology-based learning opportunities about climate change and carbon sequestration.
- Implement new waitlist system for programs and services to maximize revenue while improving internal efficiency, communication, and client service.
- Pilot new program, in partnership with a local school board, to offer land-based learning opportunities delivered by Indigenous educators to select Grade 5 classes visiting Scanlon Creek Conservation Area.

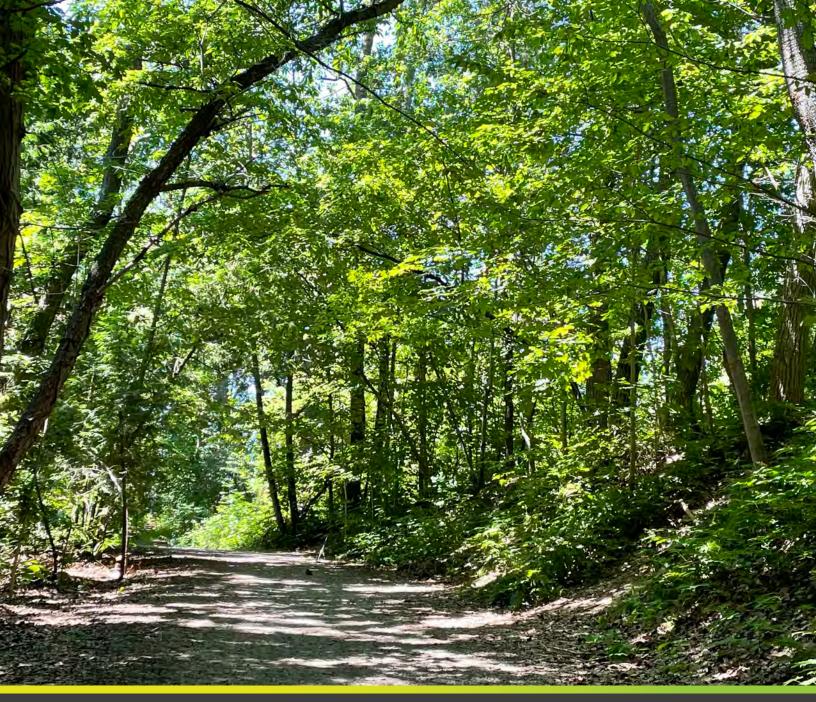
Outlook

- Our school programs and services continue to experience higher demand than ever before, providing an opportunity to build partnerships and generate more revenue.
- Our proven adaptability and innovation demonstrate that we will continue to succeed and remain key players in education programs and service delivery.

Service Pressures

 Longer-term consequences from COVID-19, such as learning loss, require adjustments to program content, resources, and delivery to meet student needs which impact staff workplans.

- Expanded the York Region District School Board contract to include field trips for secondary students to the Scanlon Creek Nature Centre bringing the total number of student participants to more than 4,100.
- Enhanced the Grade 4 integrated learning program to make more explicit links to climate change education, mental health and wellbeing, and the Conservation Authority vision.
- Increased the scope of school board contracts to include more students and teachers within existing programs, as well as the introduction of new programs targeting more grades.
- Offered our first series of educator professional development workshops for new teachers and their school mentors in the New Teacher Induction Program.
- Received \$150,000 over 2 years for new climate learning hub as the recipient of RBC Tech for Nature grant.



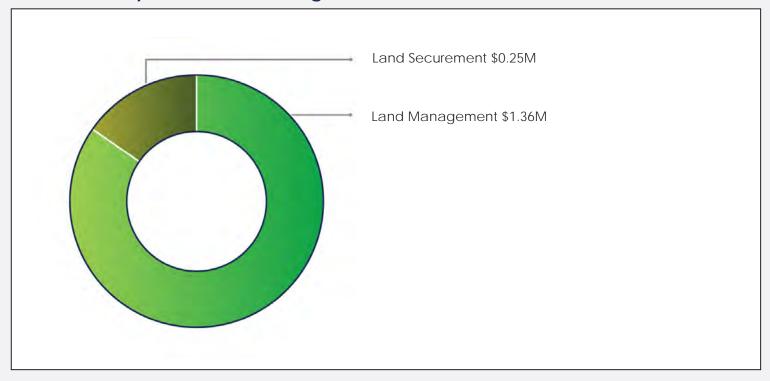
Greenspace Services

Greenspace Services ensures that valuable greenspace is enhanced and restored and that recreational opportunities are provided in safe, well maintained natural settings, so that our watershed residents can enjoy connections to nature and a high quality of life. Greenspace Services consists of the following program areas:

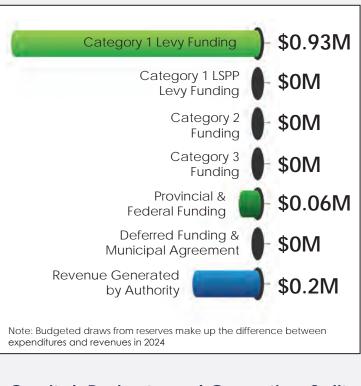
- Land Management
- Land Securement



2024 Greenspace Services Budget \$1.61M, 7.1 FTEs



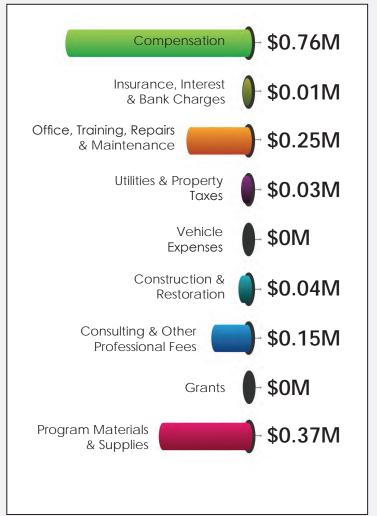
Revenue Source \$1.19M



Capital, Projects and Operating Split



Expenditure Type \$1.61M



Fast Facts

- We protect more than 2,350 hectares of land in the Lake Simcoe watershed.
- More than 153,000 people visited our most popular conservation areas in 2023.
- The Lake Simcoe **Conservation Preserve** provides habitat for over 290 plants and 110 wildlife species and includes 38 vegetation community types.



- Completed and began implementing the Conservation Areas Signage Strategy. New roadside entry signs were installed at Scanlon Creek. Whitchurch, Pangman Springs, and Thornton Bales Conservation Areas.
- Completed trail and infrastructure upgrades at Beaver River Trail Conservation Area with support through the Federal Development Tourism Relief Program.
- Undertook trail improvements at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area.
- Installed trees and benches at Rogers Reservoir and Scanlon Creek Conservation Areas, continuing our Memorial Program in partnership with the Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation.
- Completed the first year monitoring of bat habitat structures at 3 conservation areas.
- Continued active management of invasive plant species at Rogers Reservoir and Scanlon Creek Conservation Areas.
- Installed perimeter fencing and signage at the new Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve.



Land Management

The goal of our Land Management program is to strike a balance between conserving the natural environment and facilitating opportunities for outdoor recreation, education, and awareness.

2024 Focus

- Finalize the development of a Conservation Areas Strategy, as directed by the Conservation Authorities Act.
- Initiate the Master Planning process and traditional Indigenous ecological knowledge study for the Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve.
- Design and construct accessible trail linkages at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area, providing improved access to facilities.
- Implement Phase 2 of the Conservation Areas Signage Strategy, including property identification, regulatory, and wayfinding signage.
- Undertake parking lot and trail upgrades at Whitchurch, Pangman Springs, and Beaver River Conservations Areas to improve visitor experience.

Outlook

Identification of conservation areas as a Category 1, mandated service under the Conservation Authorities Act, has confirmed support for ongoing investment in visitor service infrastructure such as trails, signage, and parking lots.

Service Pressures

- Conservation lands in urban areas face added pressures from increased levels of trail use, encroachment and encampments by people experiencing homelessness.
- Aging infrastructure (roads, trails, signage, etc.) to support recreational activities on our lands continues to require significant resources to ensure effective maintenance and management.

Land Securement

Our Land Securement program continues to seek to enhance our landholdings through donations, easements and/or purchases, while taking steps to ensure our property portfolio aligns with Conservation Authority management objectives. This includes securing lands to connect communities with greenspace, and to restore, enhance or create ecological features to support the watershed's natural heritage systems.

Outlook

 Continue implementing Priority 1 and 2 initiatives as part of our Land Disposition Strategy.

2024 Focus

- Undertake an Indigenous
 Land Visioning project with
 local First Nation partners
 and begin long-term
 planning for the Lake Simcoe
 Conservation Preserve,
 consulting with community
 stakeholders and partners
 to establish management
 priorities, restoration targets,
 opportunities for Indigenous
 cultural engagement, and
 to identify opportunities for
 passive recreation.
- Continue to seek
 opportunities for strategic
 land acquisition based on
 our Natural Heritage System
 Land Securement Project
 (2019-2025) and Ecological
 Offsetting Program.

 Costs associated with the purchase of property and the associated legal fees continue to rise.

Fast Facts

 Access to consistent funding for land securement initiatives continues to be challenging, which increases reliance on monetary donations, grants, and government funding programs.

Service Pressures

 Infrastructure development within the watershed continues to impact conservation lands, requiring agreements to facilitate access and ensure protection of environmental features.

2023 Achievements

Enrollment of the Lake Simcoe Conservation

Preserve, our largest collection of protected

lands at 446 hectares, in the Conservation

designation of the lands as Environmental

burden significantly. Revenues derived from

Protection has reduced the property tax

agricultural leases are being invested in

Lands Tax Incentive program and

property management.

- Completed a Baseline
 Documentation Report,
 Stewardship Plan, and
 Opportunities and Constraints
 mapping for our new
 360-hectare Lake Simcoe
 Conservation Preserve,
 detailing existing site conditions
 and significant ecological
 features, and providing general
 stewardship recommendations
 for managing the lands.
- Continued to advance our Land Disposition Strategy, including transfer of Franklin Beach, Holmes Point, and Willow Beach Conservation Areas and Keswick North Watercourse, to the Town of Georgina.





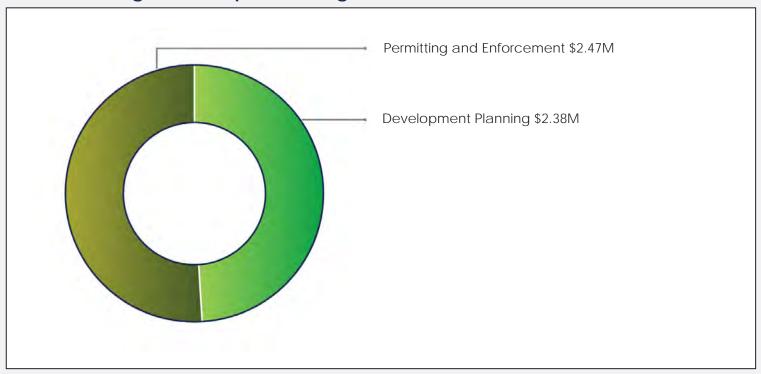
Planning & Development

Planning and Development Services ensures that development in the watershed progresses in a sustainable manner that will protect natural heritage features, direct development away from natural hazard lands, and will protect our water resources. We follow a planning-first principle which ensures that planning permissions are in place before we consider any further approvals under the Conservation Authorities Act. Planning and Development Services consists of the following program areas:

- **Development Planning**
- Permitting and Enforcement



2024 Planning & Development Budget \$4.85M, 31.9 FTEs



Revenue Source \$4.84M



Capital, Projects and Operating Split



Expenditure Type \$4.85M



Fast Facts

- Received 857 applications made under the Planning Act.
- Reviewed 257 Hydrogeology and 139 Natural Heritage submissions.
- Reviewed 526 engineering submissions in support of the Planning Act, and permit applications.
- Provided 340 pre-consultation responses on concept submissions.

2023 Achievements

- Collaborated with municipal partners to identify practices to ensure timely approvals of **Planning Act** applications.
- Provided technical education sessions to industry partners on natural heritage and watershed planning.
- Created standards and checklists for digital submissions to ensure streamlined reviews.
- Reviewed and updated Planning Memorandums of Understanding based on municipal needs and changes resulting from provincial legislation (i.e. Bill 229, Bill 108 and Bill 23).
- Assisted municipal partners with comprehensive updates to Official Plan, Secondary Plan, and Zoning By-law documents.



Development Planning

The Development Planning program provides technical expertise in natural heritage, hydrogeology, engineering, and stormwater management. We deliver proactive and innovative guidance through our review of development applications on stormwater management, groundwater recharge, and phosphorus loading. We work with our municipal partners to influence sustainable development that protects source water areas, people, and property by integrating environmental considerations into the planning process. This is achieved through the identification and mapping of natural features, pre-consultation, and policy development and implementation.

2024 Focus

- Finalize the Planning and **Development Procedural** Manual to provide guidance to industry partners in the preparation of submission materials.
- Continue to provide opportunities for continuous learning and development for staff through professional training.
- Continue to review and update our Planning Memorandums of Understanding based on changes resulting from provincial legislation (i.e. Bill 229, Bill 108 and Bill 23).

Service Pressures

- Maintaining a high caliber of client service and balanced fees can be challenging due to constant fluctuations in the housing market.
- Reduction in timelines for municipal plan review will impact the Conservation Authority review timeframes.
- Quality of technical submissions continues to decline, increasing the amount of staff time required, which is compounded by reduced approval timelines in the Planning Act.

Outlook

- As growth pressure in the Lake Simcoe watershed persists, staff must balance between increased population, meeting community demands, and preserving the environment.
- Legislative changes have altered review roles and responsibilities of the Conservation Authority. We continue to provide planning advice to municipal partners in our capacity.

Permitting and Enforcement

The Permitting and Enforcement program is responsible for implementing and enforcing the relevant legislation under the Conservation Authorities Act, including Regulation 41/24, and the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and Plan. This legislation specifies that our permission is required prior to undertaking development within lands identified as hazard lands.

Hazard lands are defined as lands that could be unsafe for development because of naturally occurring processes associated with flooding, erosion, dynamic beaches or unstable soil or bedrock. This includes, wetlands and areas adjacent to wetlands, areas adjacent to rivers and stream valleys, watercourse, and shorelines. The goal of regulating development within hazard lands is to protect people and property and limit social disruption that would occur as a result of a natural hazard event. This is achieved through the identification and mapping of hazard lands, pre-consultation and policy development, and implementation.

2024 Focus

- Improve client service strategies and track and evaluate customer service surveys.
- Review and update existing hazard mapping to reflect legislative changes and updated shoreline hazard mapping.
- Undertake a re-review of the Development Services Fee Schedule.
- Update policies and procedures according to the new provincial regulations.

Outlook

 Customer service remains a top priority while implementing our mandate of protecting people and property. We will continue to monitor emerging issues and government priorities and use collaborative approaches and adaptability to ensure consistent decision making and prioritization of services and delivery to the public and our municipal partners.

Service Pressures

- Uncertainty around future legislation and regulatory changes.
- An increase in the complexity of files, combined with reduced timelines for review, results in difficulty balancing efficiency and comprehensive reviews.



Fast Facts

- Reviewed 1,192 applications and issued 804 permits.
- Responded to 1,845 general inquiries from the public.
- Responded to 233 complaints about potential unauthorized development.

- Met 97% of the timelines under Conservation Authority Liaison Committee standards.
- Reviewed and commented on 20 Environmental Assessments including 2 major infrastructure projects: the Bradford By-Pass and York Sewage Solutions.
- Updated our Enforcement and Compliance Fee schedule to promote voluntary compliance.
- Obtained guilty verdicts on 22 Counts of developing without approvals, with over \$100,000 in fines issued by the courts.
- Worked with Conservation Ontario and the Regulatory Compliance Committee to present on updating and streamlining enforcement protocols and procedures.



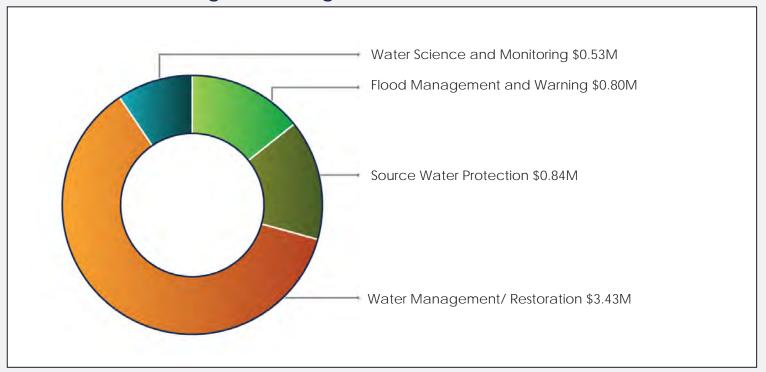
Water Risk Management

The goal of Water Risk Management is to ensure that we have a safe, clean, and adequate supply of drinking water, to undertake restoration projects to protect and manage water and to engage in research activities to inform decision making. Water Risk Management consists of the following program areas:

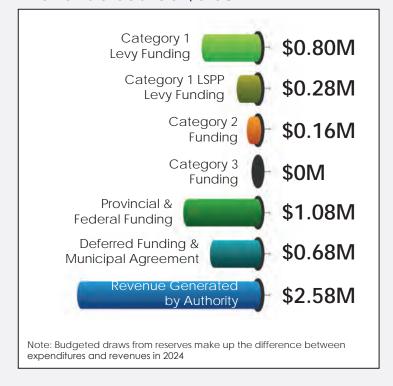
- Flood Management and Warning
- Source Water Protection
- Water Management/Restoration
- Water Science and Monitoring



2024 Water Risk Mangement Budget \$5.60M, 9.3FTEs



Revenue Source \$5.58M



Capital, Projects and Operating Split



Expenditure Type \$5.60M



Fast Facts Issued 15 riverine flood messages and 1 shoreline hazard message. Monitored 14 stream flow gauges, 5 precipitation gauges, and 8 snow survey sites. Co-organized and hosted a Flood Forecasting and Warning seminar for municipal partners in

2024 Focus Continue to focus on

- Development Plan Reviews to reduce the risk of 2023 Achievements flooding in the Lake Simcoe watershed. Completed work to update Continue to monitor the floodplains in the Barrie
 - weather forecasts and watershed conditions to inform flood messaging and support partners and stakeholders.

etc.) from hazards due to flooding.

Explore and adapt our role in rapidly changing stormwater management and regulatory requirements to provide innovative support to our municipal and industry partners.

Outlook

Flood Management and Warning

The goal of the Flood Management and Warning program is to

reduce the risk to people, property, and infrastructure (roads, bridges,

- The changing climate is creating more extreme weather events and increasing the likelihood of winter runoff flooding and ice damage to properties.
- Leveraging the new data sets available from Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) to update floodplain mapping to help predict flooding events more accurately.

Service Pressures

- Climate change creates significant challenges on how to better predict both the frequency and extent of significant weather events.
- Reduced financial resources due to provincial funding reductions.

- Creek subwatersheds, in conjunction with the City of Barrie, Tatham Engineering, and DM Wills Associates. The value of the combined work is approximately \$224,000.

conjunction with Toronto and Region Conservation

Authority, Credit Valley

Conservation, and

Conservation Halton.

- Worked with the Science and Monitoring business unit to install a new Lake Simcoe water level gauge.
- Modernized the workflow for floodplain mapping updates between the Engineering and Information Services and Technology teams.

Source Water Protection

The Source Water Protection program ensures sustainable and safe sources of clean drinking water to residents, within the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region, by making sure legislative requirements within the **Clean Water Act** and policies in the Source Protection Plan are implemented.

2024 Focus

- Continue to review and amend the source protection plan to incorporate new municipal drinking water systems, as required by Regulation 205 of the Safe Drinking Water Act.
- Amend the Source Protection
 Plan to incorporate
 the Source Protection
 Committee's revised policies,
 and initiate consultation on
 the draft amendment, as
 directed by ministerial order.

Outlook

 Our legislated requirements under the Clean
 Water Act will continue to define our pivotal role as the lead Source Protection Authority; this includes supporting the Source Protection Committee and reviewing and amending the Source Protection Plan.

Fast Facts

- Over the past year, Source Protection staff have undertaken amendments to the Source Protection Plan to address proposed changes at 10 municipal drinking water systems and to address growth projections or replace aging infrastructure.
- There are currently 284 municipal wells, and 16 water treatment plants in the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region.

2023 Achievements

- Completed our annual report to the minister on plan implementation.
- Coordinated with watershed municipalities to ensure new drinking water systems were added to the Source Protection Plan.
- Completed a review of Source Protection Plan policies, to ensure they remain appropriate given recent changes to provincial policy.

Service Pressures

- The Safe Drinking Water Act requires amendments to the Source Protection Plan before any new (or expanded) municipal drinking water system can be put into use. The rate of growth and development in our source protection area will result in a significant workload for years to come.
- Continued provincial funding of this program is needed to ensure service levels are maintained and no delays occur to the approval of any new (or expanded) drinking water systems.





Water Management/Restoration

The Water Management/Restoration program aims to improve water quality and better manage water quantity during storm events through the implementation of low impact development and innovative stormwater pond retrofits.

2024 Focus

- Foster ongoing collaboration with private and commercial landowners to effectively manage stormwater infrastructure and maximize environmental benefits.
- Collaborate with local municipalities to successfully implement stormwater retrofit projects.
- Utilize the recently finalized designs to effectively address stormwater concerns to implement construction projects in our urban environment.

Service Pressures

- Restoration projects take many years to implement and partner delays are unpredictable.
- It continues to be challenging to find public and/or private land suitable for stormwater related restoration projects.
- Added pressures from the effects of climate change and severe weather events increase the importance of implementing stormwater projects.

Outlook

We will continue to cultivate partnership opportunities with municipalities to identify, support, and implement urban restoration projects, including low impact development retrofits, through inkind work and funding through the phosphorus and water balance offsetting programs.

Fast Facts

- The York Region Infrastructure protection project naturalized 122 metres of streambank and reduces 5.72 kg of phosphorus per year.
- The City of Barrie stormwater and stream retrofit project improved creek habitat and will reduce phosphorus by 57.36 kg per year.
- We began a partnership with the Town of Georgina to install 14 catch basin inserts.

- Partnered with the Town of Newmarket and York Region on a streambank protection project which aimed to protect local infrastructure, help naturalize the stream, and reduce phosphorus.
- Funded a large stormwater retrofit and streambank erosion project in the City of Barrie to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff and contaminants.
- Continued partnerships with municipal partners on designs for parking lot and stormwater retrofits in Innisfil, Bradford, Brock, and Newmarket.

Water Science and Monitoring

The Water Science and Monitoring program is essential to informing our understanding of watershed processes, identifying emerging issues, and documenting environmental trends. This information is used to allow us to adapt our management activities to achieve our mission of a healthy Lake Simcoe and watershed.

2024 Focus

- Conduct pre-construction performance monitoring of a stormwater facility slated for retrofit to compare with future post-construction performance monitoring results.
- Develop an implementation strategy for interested municipalities to complete Consolidated Linear Environmental Compliance Approval pilot project.
- Continue to develop environmental flow methodology for the Lake Simcoe watershed.
- Continue to operate and maintain 14 stream flow monitoring stations, 1 lake level station, 5 weather stations, and 11 groundwater monitoring stations.

Outlook

- The changing climate and increased extreme weather events indicate that our stream flow monitoring network plays a key role in helping us to know how to respond to local impacts.
- Stormwater management and performance monitoring continue to grow our understanding of stormwater runoff impacts and treatment.

Service Pressures

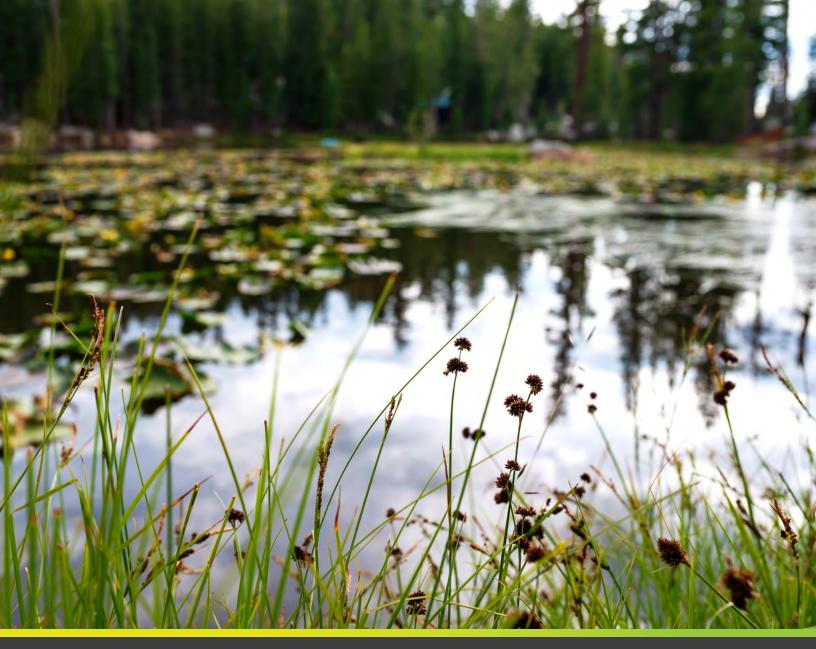
 Challenges continue around predictability and certainty of project-specific funding agreements with municipal and provincial partners.



- 96 water quality samples were collected as part of stormwater performance monitoring projects.
- Our stream flow monitoring stations generate approximately 1.5 million data points annually.

- Finalized the 2-year study measuring phosphorus loading from 3 urban residential catchments of different ages.
- Conducted performance monitoring of 2 stormwater pond retrofits comparing the facility to design criteria or with preconstruction monitoring performance.
- Conducted monitoring of Hawkestone Creek flows and water levels to develop an environmental flow framework for the Hawkestone Creek watershed that can be implemented across all Lake Simcoe watersheds.
- Installed a new year-round lake level monitoring station at the Beaverton pier to improve access to real-time lake level data and improve accuracy of lake level measurement.
- Continued work on a pilot project to develop a receiver monitoring program for municipal stormwater infrastructure to assist municipal partners in meeting the requirement.





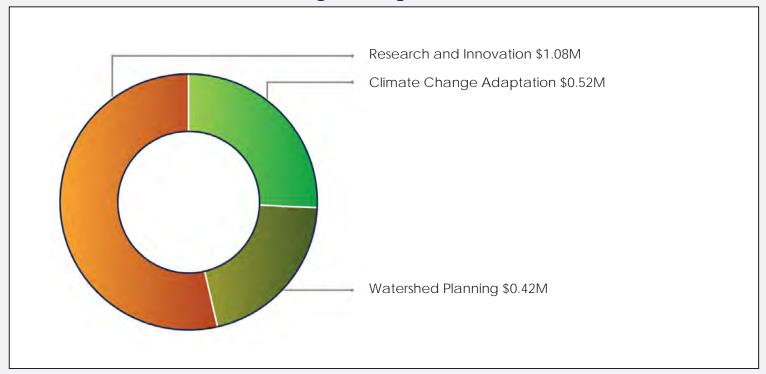
Watershed Studies & Strategies

Watershed Studies and Strategies focuses on conducting research and science to inform the decisions that we make regarding our policies, regulations, and restoration works. Watershed Studies and Strategies consists of the following program areas:

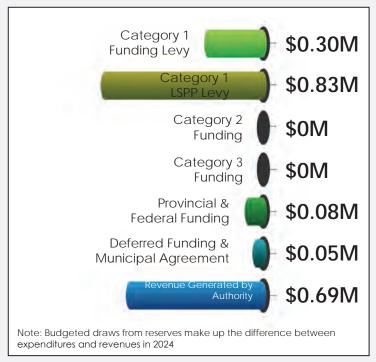
- Climate Change Adaptation
- Research and Innovation
- Watershed Planning



2024 Watershed Studies & Strategies Budget \$2.02M, 10.7FTEs



Revenue Source \$1.96M



Capital, Projects and Operating Split



Expenditure Type \$2.02M



Fast Facts

- The average length of time ice covers Lake Simcoe has decreased from 126 days between 1852 - 1873 to 91 days between 2001 - 2020.
- 1 hectare of restored wetland sequesters an equivalent of the annual carbon emissions of 2 people living in the Lake Simcoe watershed.

2023 Achievements

- Continued to develop our understanding of carbon sequestration rates in the Lake Simcoe watershed and what the Conservation Authority and member municipalities can do to increase the amount of carbon being sequestered. This included:
 - monitoring sequestration in select restoration projects,
 - beginning a pilot project to monitor sequestration in street trees,
 - developing a methodology to monitor methane emissions from wetlands, and
 - assessing the role of natural succession in carbon sequestration.
- Assessed how our restoration programs may need to adjust to a changing climate, particularly as it relates to stream restoration.
- Provided guidance and input into climate change working groups and committees to ensure continued collaboration with partners.



Climate Change

The Climate Change program aims to ensure climate resilience within the Lake Simcoe watershed, with a focus on our communities, water resources, and natural heritage systems. Our actions and desired outcomes are directed by our climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

2024 Focus

- Expand and build understanding of carbon sequestration projects and their contribution to meet municipal net-zero goals.
- Assess the impacts that climate change has and will have on the delivery of our Conservation Authority programs and services.
- Strengthen our role in guiding, advising, and supporting municipal climate change working groups.

Service Pressures

- The climate continues to change, and we continue to experience extreme weather events. The **Conservation Authority** plays a vital role in helping municipalities achieve the climate targets set for their communities.
- Resource challenges can limit our ability to deliver our full range of climate change related programs and services.

Outlook

Climate change continues to be an area of concern for watershed residents, member municipalities, and other levels of government. Nature-based solutions, while not the full solution to the climate crisis, have the potential to make significant contributions to both climate change adaptation and mitigation. The Conservation Authority has a significant role in ensuring that this potential is met in the Lake Simcoe watershed.

Research and Innovation

Research and Innovation supports and advances management approaches to mitigate human activities that negatively impact the health and quality of Lake Simcoe and its watershed. These approaches must be outcome oriented, cost-effective, easy to implement, and transferrable.

2024 Focus

- Complete Lake Simcoe watershed municipal stormwater database semi-automation pilot project.
- Deliver 5 fee-for-service municipal stormwater management facilities inspection and maintenance programs.
- Lead 4 municipal working group sessions.
- Deliver a municipal pre-treatment versus endof-pipe stormwater management maintenance feasibility study focusing on sediment and leaf litter removal.
- Continue to develop and deliver training to support municipal low impact development inspection and maintenance activities using best practices.

Outlook

 Identifying maintenance efficiencies using pretreatment and other infrastructure options for sediment and leaf litter removal will benefit operation programs to support cost savings and collaborative municipal stormwater management planning.

Service Pressures

- Finding sustainable external funding to support continued innovations.
- Ongoing regulatory changes for municipal stormwater management.



Fast Facts

- Provided inspection and maintenance training to 100+ municipal staff and other stormwater professionals.
- Performed stormwater management inspection and maintenance services for 124 stormwater management facilities.
- The Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program Low Impact Development Wiki Guide had 43,654 users in 2023.

- Completed an environmental co-benefits of low impact development stormwater feasibility study for York Region.
- Continued technical services in support of adoption or adaptation of the Lake Simcoe watershed municipal stormwater management database for watershed municipalities.
- Delivered 2 fee-for-service municipal stormwater management facilities inspection and maintenance programs, as well as a field day and virtual training session for our watershed municipalities and other jurisdictions in Ontario.
- Developed 2 system-wide stormwater management operation and maintenance manuals for Lake Simcoe watershed municipalities.
- Led 4 municipal working group sessions to support improved low impact development inspection and maintenance planning and execution.
- Delivered 3 stormwater management technical working group sessions.
- Delivered 3 full-day courses to municipal and industry practitioners on sustainable infrastructure, low impact development, and climate resilience.
- Supported release of low impact development Treatment Train Tool Version 2.2 through the collaborative Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program partnership.

Watershed Planning

Watershed Planning involves identifying factors affecting watershed health, selecting preferred solutions to address these impacts, and then monitoring progress and adapting plans to achieve desired outcomes. Watershed planning is essential to improving the health of Lake Simcoe and the watershed and is a legislated requirement of several provincial policies, including the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and Plan.

2024 Focus

- Finalize development of the online Subwatershed Plans platform and share with partners to assist in municipal planning needs.
- Finalize the internal and external consultations and complete the Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy.

Outlook

The Watershed Planning program, informed by watershed and subwatershed plans, continues to provide critical guidance in watershed science in land use planning to member municipalities and the development industry.

Service Pressures

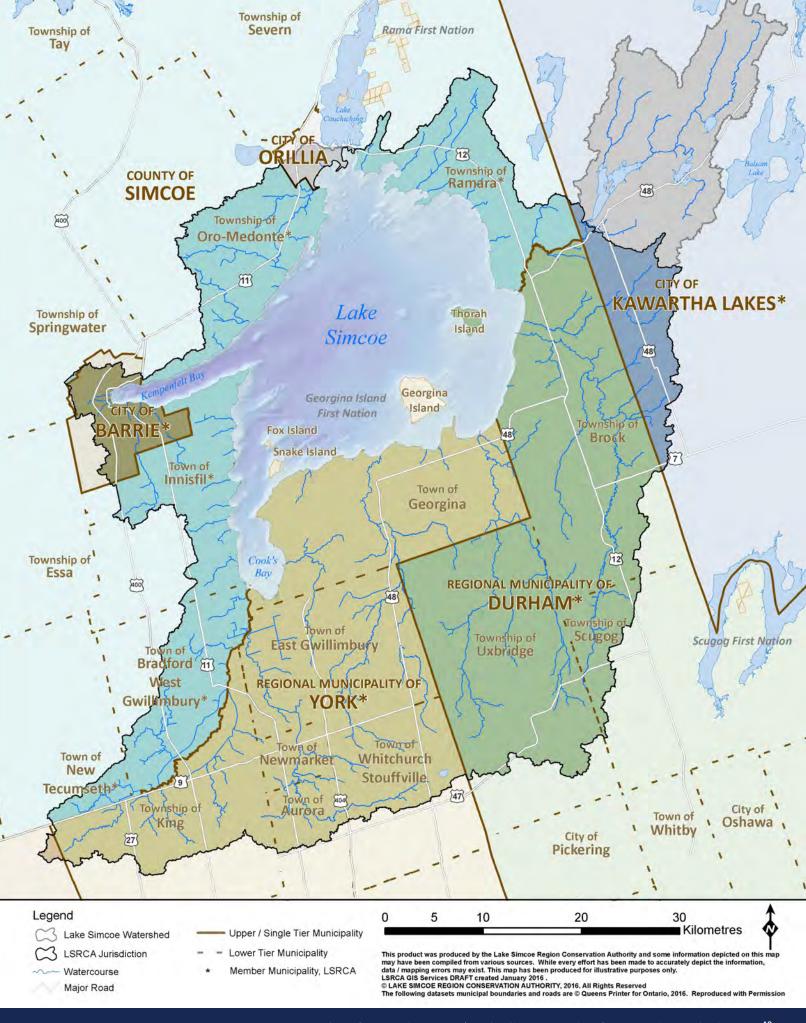
Funding constraints limit our capacity to complete critical studies needed to update and implement modernized subwatershed plans.



Fast Facts

Since the 1970s, chloride levels in Lake Simcoe have increased by over 500 %. The highest levels found were in Western Creek in November 2023 at 14,204 mg/L. As a reference sea water salt concentration is 20,000 mg/L.

- Continued the development of modernizing the subwatershed planning and began the development of a new online platform that will ensure that the plans are easier to access, explore, and update.
- Co-hosted Salt Forum 2023, a workshop of conservation authority staff, winter maintenance professionals, and municipal staff to discuss joint interest in improving winter maintenance practices.
- Began the development of a Watershed-based Resource Management Strategy, one of the new provincially mandated programs and services required of conservation authorities.





Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) is the leading environmental protection agency in the Lake Simcoe watershed. For over 70 years, we've been collaborating with community, government, and other partners to protect and restore the environmental health and quality of Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

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If you require this document in an alternate format, please contact us at 905-895-1281.





Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation (LSCF) is the leading environmental charity in our watershed, raising funds from individuals and organizations for the critical environmental programs and projects of Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. It is one of only a few environmental charities nationwide that has been accredited in Imagine Canada's Standards Program after demonstrating excellence in operations in the charitable sector. Contact them directly for information about how you can support their important fundraising activities.

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