



Quinte  
CONSERVATION

# CONSERVATION AREA STRATEGY

2023







## Introduction

The Conservation Areas are perhaps, in the eyes of the general public, the most sensitive feature that the Authority owns. Historically (primarily during the 1960s and 1970s), the Provincial government greatly subsidized the creation of landscape plans and provided capital funds for the development of these properties as recreational destinations for the public. Conservation Areas are often the only common theme of knowledge for members of the public when the topic of Conservation Authorities is brought up. Increasingly, staff receive notices, complaints, comments, insights, and direction from the general public regarding these land holdings. Even among staff, points of view, direction for future facilities, and proposed uses of these lands vary widely. The only common theme appears to match the initial intent behind the purchase and development of these lands: **public enjoyment of natural spaces.**

Generally, recommended activities are focused on hiking (which includes dog walking, snow shoeing, cross-country skiing, and leisure walking), boat launching (which includes fishing boats, canoes/kayaks and other small craft vessels), camping at Depot Lakes (which includes interior, boat-in, back-country sites), and passive uses like picnicking, nature photography, group activities, and portrait photography (which often includes the use of picnic shelters, picnic tables, and manicured areas).

## Goals and Objectives:

### GOAL:

The primary goal of Conservation Areas has always been for safe public access to a protected natural space. From this access, it is hoped that the public will gain an appreciation for the values

of preserving and protecting naturalized areas – which is one of the fundamental reasons for the formation of Ontario’s Conservation Authorities in the 1940s. These values centred around the control of flooding (i.e. water management structures) and the protection of erodible soils (forest cover and wetlands retain water and thus slow erosive forces) in a degraded landscape.

The secondary goals of these properties is for the provision of wildlife habitat, protection of sensitive natural areas, access for recreational activities, and production of forest products.

### OBJECTIVES:

The following objectives play an important role in how Quinte Conservation’s staff prioritize and manage the areas.

- To maintain safe, compatible, multi-use natural areas by providing an opportunity for passive outdoor recreational pursuits like hiking, bird watching, picnicking, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, canoeing, photography, picnics, nature appreciation, etc.
- To support demonstration activities for sustainable land use (i.e. sound forest management practices and/or wetland management projects), and provide sites for research activities and other ecosystem restoration techniques;
- To provide a space for public education (i.e. school board and club) activities where appropriate.





## H.R. FRINK CONSERVATION AREA AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

The H.R. Frink Conservation Area at 381 and 384 Thrasher Road, Plainfield ON, has hiking trails on the north side and south side of Thrasher Road for a total of 12 km of trails.

The north side of the area contains an education centre where outdoor education programs are delivered by local school boards as well as Quinte Conservation. The north side features a network of forested trails leading visitors along the Moira River, around a silver maple swamp, through a mature hardwood forest, and to Parks Creek.



The south side of the area contains several more kilometers of trails, including the popular Wetland Ecology Boardwalk.

A graveled trail can be found leading from the parking lot to the wetland boardwalk for ease of access throughout the year.

## Conservation Areas

The primary Conservation Areas that are intended for widespread public use, thus require a high maintenance standard, are the Depot Lakes, H. R. Frink Centre, Little Bluff, Macaulay Mountain, Massassauga Point, O'Hara Mill, Potter's Creek, and Vanderwater.

The Secondary areas, which are a more naturalized, are intended for low impact nature appreciation and thus have a lower maintenance standard. These areas include Beaver Meadow, Deerock, Sheffield, and Sidney.

### DEPOT LAKES CONSERVATION AREA AND CAMPGROUND

Nestled within the Canadian Shield, Depot Lakes Conservation Area and Campground at 1662 Second Lake Road, Godfrey ON offers many outdoor activities.

There are 20 shoreline interior boat-in-only sites that offer a great back-country camping experience for visitors. Sites can be booked through Let'sCamp.ca for 5-night periods from Thursday to Tuesday during May to September.

There are 47 non-serviced seasonal sites for visitors who wish to spend their summers at the lake. Available sites are posted at DepotLakes.ca

9 km of hiking trails , starting in the parking lot at the campground office, wind through the properties of Second and Third Lakes.

From hiking to fishing, camping to boating, visitors can do it all!





## MASSASSAUGA POINT CONSERVATION AREA

Massassauga Point Conservation Area at 1280 Massassauga Road, Belleville ON contains a 4 km trail network winding along the Bay of Quinte that will take hikers through a bur oak savanna and mixed terrain of forests, limestone outcroppings, and alvar plains.

Once home to a thriving hotel during the 1890s, visitors can find what remains of the building's foundation to this day.

This area is rich in history and contains a variety of rare plant species. Water access points across from the parking lot can be used to launch a canoe or kayak.



## O'HARA MILL CONSERVATION AREA AND PIONEER HOMESTEAD

O'Hara Mill Conservation Area and Pioneer Homestead at 638 Mill Road, Madoc ON will transport visitors back in time to the mid-1800s where they can see lovingly preserved pioneer era buildings like a blacksmith shop, carriage house, and one-room schoolhouse, as well as the original O'Hara family home, which is now a museum.

This area is cared for by the Friends of O'Hara Mill Volunteer Association. For more information on the trails, events or operating hours of the homestead, visit [OHaraMill.ca](http://OHaraMill.ca).



## LITTLE BLUFF CONSERVATION AREA

A variety of short trails totaling 1.5 km wind through Little Bluff Conservation Area at 3625 County Road 13, Picton ON.

The 20-metre high limestone bluff commands a panoramic view of the aqua blue waters in Prince Edward Bay. This area also includes a cobble stone beach, known as a barrier beach, which protects a significant wetland from the waters of Lake Ontario.

Visitors can also find the remains of an old limestone grain storage that was used to load barley during Prince Edward County's prosperous 'Barley Days' from the 1860s-1890s.

## MACAULAY MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION AREA

Macaulay Mountain Conservation Area at 224 County Road 8 in Picton, ON is home to a steep escarpment overlooking the Town of Picton.

This area contains over 7 km of trails including a walkway and Birdhouse City.





### BEAVER MEADOW CONSERVATION AREA

Perfect for plant and bird enthusiasts, Beaver Meadow Conservation Area at 158 County Road 11, Picton ON has two short hiking trails, each ending at a wetland viewing platform. This area is home to a variety of wildlife and approximately 330 plant species.



### DEEROCK CONSERVATION AREA

A great location for anglers and boaters, Deerock Lake at 390 Deer Rock Lake Road, Flinton ON is a small property that contains a public boat launch and is home to the Elzevir Peatlands Conservation Reserve.



### SHEFFIELD CONSERVATION AREA

Sheffield Conservation Area at 8032 County Road 41, Erinsville ON offers an advanced 4.5 km trail that loops through the property and provides hikers with a birds-eye view of Little Melon Lake. The area also contains a water access point for launching a canoe or kayak. Part of the property is home to a dark sky viewing area that is maintained by the county of Lennox and Addington. Inexperienced hikers may find the trail challenging. Proper footwear should always be worn. Depending on skill level, it may take up to 6 hours to complete the loop.



### SIDNEY CONSERVATION AREA

Sidney Conservation Area at 379 Airport Road, Stirling ON is a quaint property with just over 1 km of trails that wind through a stately red pine plantation, sections of mixed forest, and open areas. This area is a popular destination for cross-country skiers and those seeking a simple nature trail.



### POTTER'S CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

Potter's Creek Conservation Area at 2061 and 2056 Old Highway 2, Belleville ON contains approximately 7 km of trails that exist throughout a diverse terrain of orchards, meadows, forest, and shoreline.

This area consists of two separate trail networks on the north and south sides of Old Hwy 2. The north side trails are a popular destination for hikers and cross-country skiers. The south side trails offer access to the Bay of Quinte and includes a paved loop trail that provides an opportunity for those with accessibility restrictions to spend time in nature.



### VANDERWATER CONSERVATION AREA

Vanderwater Conservation Area at 512 Vanderwater Road, Thomasburg ON is located along the banks of the Moira River. Visitors can explore a trail network consisting of 16 km that will lead them through mature forests and to the Moira River where the water cascades over a series of limestone steps.







## Policies for CA Management

It is the implicit responsibility of all users of public lands to undertake their activities in an ecologically sound and socially responsible manner, and to accept the risks associated with such activities. All users should be aware of other activities that may be occurring within the site concurrently and should use the site at their own discretion.

Considering the influence these areas have on the community, staff could focus further promotion of these spaces through social media, events, and publications, thus encouraging more public use.

In addition, given the potential tourist use, ecotourism ventures (private enterprises) could be allowed on these properties (subject to a suitable lease being arranged with the Authority). Two examples available within other Authorities include: adventure rope courses within trees, and passive watercraft rentals (canoe, kayak, stand-up paddle boards).

### The following are a list of staff policies used to manage the areas:

- Conservation Areas should be demonstrations of naturalized areas to the public.
- Maintenance of roads, access routes, and trails will be performed by staff/Adopt-a-Trail volunteer stewards that will not compromise the ecological integrity of the property.
- Staff will only consider new road and/or trail development through further detailed planning which strives to avoid sensitive natural areas.
- Archaeological sites associated with past human activities, endeavours, or events (including surface artifacts, subsurface strata of human origin or incorporating cultural deposits, remains of structural features, or a combination of these attributes) shall be protected from disturbance whenever possible.

- Identified species at risk and their habitat should be mapped and protected from possible disruption by other land uses where ever possible.
- Property boundary fences will be maintained as needed, consistent with the *Line Fences Act*.
- Commercial forest activities will only take place at Vanderwater CA to demonstration good forestry practices and wise forest stewardship (i.e. thinning of planted forests to encourage the regrowth of native hardwood forests).
- Staff may need to manage nuisance wildlife in Conservation Areas.
- Properties are open to research activities relating to natural resource conservation with appropriate restrictions which will be outlined in a land use property use agreement between the Authority and the researcher.
- Controls in the form of access restrictions such as signage, gates and land use plans may be used to define or limit public use of ecologically sensitive portions of the areas.
- The use of remote-controlled vehicles of any kind (e.g. air, land, or water craft, including drones) are not allowed on Authority property for private recreational activity.
- Conservation Areas should be demonstrations of naturalized areas to the public.
- Conservation Areas should be open daily, only from dawn until dusk.
- Any special event that will require the closure of the area to the general public shall require a 'Property Use Agreement' and monetary charge (as determined on a case-by-case basis).
- Controls in the form of access restrictions such as signage, gates and land use plans may be used to define or limit public use of ecologically sensitive portions of the areas.







Open Fires. Discharge of firearms. Bow Fishing. Hunting and/or trapping activities. Alcohol consumption. Target practice, airsoft guns, and paintball activities. Camping trailers or primitive camping in undesignated areas. Riding any type of motorized vehicle. Off leash pets. Unsanctioned creation of new trails and/or structures for mountain bikes. Public nudity and indecent acts. Use of drones. Littering/dumping of foreign material. Unauthorized placement of signs. Unauthorized damage or removal of flora.

## Revenues and Expenses

Paid parking took affect at Conservation Areas on September 1, 2018. The Authority is committed to utilizing the parking fees for operating expenses of the Conservation Areas to enhance the public experience, including portable washrooms, snow plowing, grass cutting, hazard tree removal, trail repairs, signage, and the maintenance of access roads and parking areas.

Staff time is allocated from the general levy to our Municipalities. Capital improvements (generally being trail surfacing, shelters, bridge/boardwalks, boat launches) are funded through special levy, grants, donations, and/or surplus revenues from the paid parking program.

Standardized trail head signs will display easily interpreted maps of the property boundary, list permitted uses, highlight features of natural heritage interest, and provide emergency contact information. Further, Signs on the adjacent municipal road will be sized and secured according to the specification provided by the road authority.

The training and support from volunteers assists with the reporting of any major issues which require immediate attention by staff.

Staff promote these areas through the website, digital platforms, and continue to work with local tourism programs.

- Any special event that will require the closure of the area to the general public shall require a 'Property Use Agreement' and monetary charge (as determined on a case-by-case basis).

### The following are a list of public use polices for the Conservation Areas:

- Conservation Areas should be open daily from dawn until dusk.
- Overnight camping is only permitted at Depot Lake Conservation Area, which charges a fee for camping on regulated camping sites.
- Dogs (pets) are required to be on a leash at all times no longer than 6ft. 'Stoop and scoop' and removal of waste will be required.
- Horseback riding shall only be allowed at the Vanderwater property.
- Licensed fishing activities are allowed provided they follow Provincial regulations and are not endanger-ing other users of the property (i.e. fishing should not occur where swimmers congregate).
- Wedding ceremonies or special events (such as family reunion picnics or photography sessions) will be allowed at no charge, provided that all of the rules of the conservation area are followed and under the understanding that the activity will not restrict the normal use for other visitors.
- Visitors to these areas should **'take only pictures and leave only footprints'**. Garbage collection facilities shall not be provided, and users should be prepared to take their garbage with them.

### PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES:

The following activities are prohibited on Conservation Area land and any infringement(s) will be resolved by contacting the appropriate Police and/or Conservation Officers for the subject area:







## Measurable Achievements

Staff have developed a Conservation Area Upgrade Plan that includes realistic and measurable achievements broken down into two categories. The short-term plan outlines goals that can be met given current funding availabilities. The long-term plan outlines large-scale projects that can only be achieved with additional funding, levies, or long-term budget allocation.

### SHORT-TERM PLAN

- Adding trail maps to the Avenza application for powering a mapped GPS location without the use of cellular data.
- 2kms of groomed winter trails at Vanderwater and Potter's Creek Conservation Areas.
- At least 500 metres of granular surfaced trails for ease of access at each area.
- To establish meaningful partnerships with First Nations and to create an inclusive healing space and/or signage with historical land use information and cultural recognition.
- Installation of informational kiosks

### ON THE HORIZON

- Proposed upgrades to the existing areas within a 10-year horizon.
- Landscape Architect drawings showcasing elaborate improvements within a 20-year horizon.



## Aligning with the Strategic Plan

The Conservation Areas Strategy aligns with the direction of the four drivers behind the Strategic Plan, but more specifically, under Boosting Well-Being and Brand Recognition.

To learn more about the Strategic Plan, visit [QuinteConservation.ca](https://www.QuinteConservation.ca)



Accelerating Advocacy



Boosting Well-Being



Advancing  
Environmental Science



Strengthening  
Brand Recognition

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## OUR MISSION

Creating a sustainable ecosystem where people and nature live in harmony.

## OUR VISION 2030

Advance watershed knowledge and collective actions to strengthen our natural ecosystems.





## Quinte CONSERVATION

### How to reach us

613-968-3434

[QuinteConservation.ca](http://QuinteConservation.ca)

2061 Old Hwy #2  
Belleville, ON K8N 4Z2



### Watershed Municipalities

- City of Belleville
- City of Quinte West
- County of Prince Edward
- Loyalist Township
- Madoc Township
- Municipality of Centre Hastings
- Municipality of Marmora and Lake
- Municipality of Tweed
- Town of Deseronto
- Town of Greater Napanee
- Township of Addington Highlands
- Township of Central Frontenac
- Township of North Frontenac
- Township of South Frontenac
- Township of Stirling-Rawdon
- Township of Stone Mills
- Township of Tudor and Cashel
- Township of Tyendinaga