



*Saltfleet Conservation Area*

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 - 2029

HAMILTON CONSERVATION AUTHORITY





## Our Vision

A healthy watershed for everyone.

## Our Mission

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

## OUR VALUES

### Collaboration

We foster relationships and teamwork internally and externally for collective success.

### Customer Service

We deliver excellent service that builds trust.

### Integrity

We uphold honesty, professionalism and ethics in all actions and decisions.

### Respect

We recognize and value diverse perspectives and work to understand and protect our changing environment.

### Innovation

We encourage creativity and embrace new ideas and technology to drive progress.

## FOUR PRIORITIES OF THE FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



### WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

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



### ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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



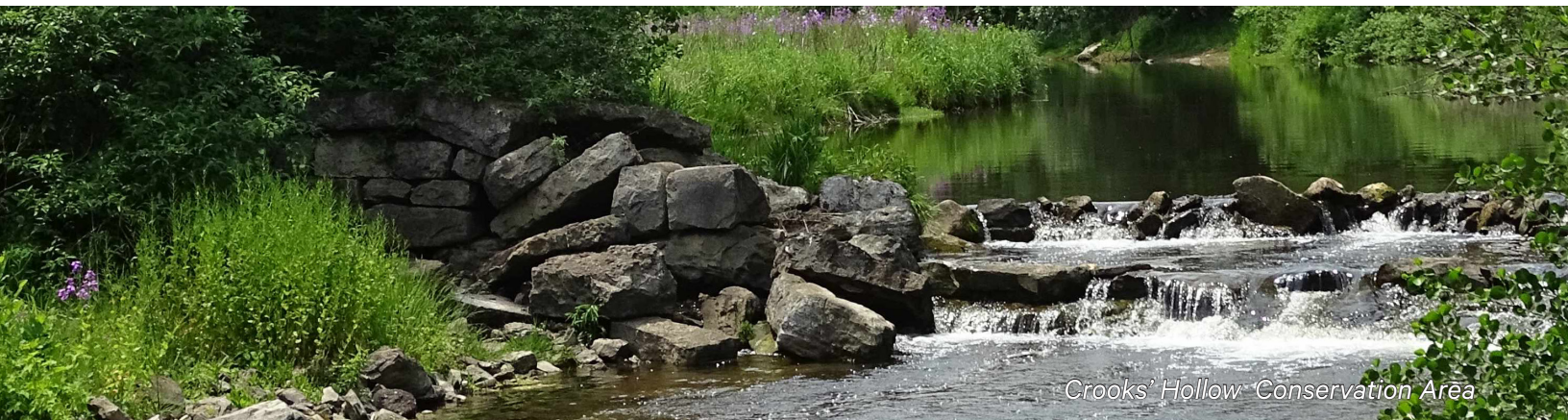
### NATURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION

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



### CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE

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



*Crooks' Hollow Conservation Area*

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR & CAO

We are excited to introduce the Hamilton Conservation Authority's (HCA) Strategic Plan for 2025-2029. This plan represents a comprehensive and forward-thinking roadmap designed to guide our efforts in four key areas: conserving natural heritage, managing water resources to protect people and property from natural hazards, striving for excellence in our operations, and connecting people to nature over the next five years.

HCA acknowledges the importance of staying resilient and adaptable in the coming years. We are actively navigating recent legislative changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, and prioritizing our actions to align with these transitions. Additionally, we recognize that the HCA watershed continues to face challenges, including population growth and development pressures, extreme weather impacts, invasive species, and a significant demand for access to natural and recreational areas.

HCA's Strategic Plan for 2025-2029 was developed through extensive consultation with our stakeholders, staff, and the public. It builds on our strengths with updated strategic priorities and initiatives where HCA will focus over the next five years to address challenges, realize opportunities, and advance our vision of a healthy watershed for everyone. It embodies our commitment to sustainability, environmental stewardship, and community engagement.

Together, we can make a significant impact on the conservation and sustainability of the watershed, and we look forward to our continued progress.



Brad Clark  
Chair



Lisa Burnside  
Chief Administrative Officer



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

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





Christie Lake Conservation Area

## WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT



Focused on safeguarding the health of the watershed and protecting people and property from natural hazards. We will prioritise measures such as flood and erosion control, water quality monitoring to assess changes in watershed health and guide restoration and enhancement programs, collaborate with watershed partners and evolve conservation priorities to address climate change, regulatory updates, and creation of new strategies.

### INITIATIVES

- Advance the implementation of our floodplain mapping program within our watershed to better understand flood risks and direct development away from natural hazards.
- Enhance our flood forecasting and warning program to issue relevant and timely flood messaging and assist municipalities and the public in responding quickly and effectively to flood events.
- Promote our Watershed Stewardship Program to further strengthen landowner education and restoration efforts on private lands and to align with the heightened public focus on climate change.
- Collaborate with the City of Hamilton on their Watershed Action Plan and support our partners involved in the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan to achieve shared environmental goals.
- Monitor the impacts of climate change through existing and enhanced monitoring programs and networks to inform adaptation and mitigation strategies.
- Update planning and regulatory policy based on the recommendations of the 2024 Shoreline Management Plan, and amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act and associated regulatory changes.





Spencer Creek

## ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE



Focused on our organizational resources to ensure efficient and responsive operations are available to meet the needs of the future. We will prioritise attracting and retaining skilled talent, financial sustainability, building organizational and technological capacity, while also focusing on enhancing communication and engagement within our watershed's communities, First Nations, and all levels of government.

### INITIATIVES

- Promote employee training, engagement, well-being, diversity, and inclusivity to strengthen our organizational resilience and ensure employees are equipped with the necessary skills to address emerging needs.
- Identify and further invest in technology that improves security measures, business processes, optimises workflows, and facilitates broader access to open data resources.
- Build upon the initial investments and initiatives in the Corporate Climate Change Strategy to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Further the physical asset inventory and enhance how we manage HCA assets through their lifespan.
- Enhance communications efforts to promote our accomplishments, programs, and services, including results of our monitoring and restoration programs, to strengthen awareness and engagement with the watershed community.
- Uphold our ties to federal, provincial, and municipal partners to work together to advance conservation efforts.
- Increase our engagement with First Nations Peoples to learn about and incorporate traditional knowledge in stewardship and teachings on the Treaty and traditional lands within the HCA watershed.





*Michigan Lily*

## NATURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION



Focused on the management and conservation of natural areas, which include the forests, wetlands, meadows, and watercourses within the watershed. We will prioritise the acquisition, restoration, and enhancement of the diverse natural areas, along with ecological monitoring to enhance our understanding of watershed ecosystems and stressors.

### INITIATIVES

- Expand protected natural areas and HCA land holdings through HCA's Land Securement Strategy and based on other sources of natural areas information and identified priorities.
- Advance progress on the Saltfleet Conservation Area Wetland Restoration Program and promote its objective and benefits.
- Manage natural areas on HCA lands through monitoring, inventories, strategies and approved master and management plan recommendations to ensure enhancement of natural areas and ecosystems.
- Engage our watershed residents and stakeholders to enhance and restore natural features through participation in stewardship programs, education initiatives, and adoption of best management practices.
- Improve our understanding of watershed ecosystems and address emerging issues by broadening the scope of HCA monitoring activities, and working with our municipal partners on the Biodiversity Action Plan and Natural Areas Inventory.





*Dundas Valley Conservation Area*

## CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE



Focused on the conservation of HCA lands and connecting communities to natural areas. We will prioritise the provision of high quality, diverse, and safe conservation areas, while promoting environmental education and awareness initiatives, outdoor recreation for health, and well-being and opportunities for participation in local conservation efforts on HCA lands.

### INITIATIVES

- Identify and support an inclusive and accessible range of programs and amenities in our conservation areas and managed lands to welcome visitors and enhance inclusivity.
- Manage and enhance conservation lands utilising best management practices to support nature appreciation and recreation activities, as communities continue to grow and look to HCA's conservation areas to spend time in nature.
- Continue development of master and management plans and implementation of priority capital reinvestments.
- Enhance volunteer engagement opportunities and outreach efforts, promoting a sense of stewardship and community involvement.
- Strengthen and continue to deliver environmental and cultural heritage education and outreach programs that connect people to nature and foster conservation.
- Collaborate with partners to share knowledge and work together to enhance access to conservation areas and trail networks.





# ABOUT HAMILTON CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

HCA is one of 36 Conservation Authorities in Ontario. Established in 1958 as the Spencer Creek Conservation Authority, it became the Hamilton Conservation Authority in 1966 when the City of Hamilton and former town of Stoney Creek joined the Authority. HCA is located at the western end of Lake Ontario and is the area's largest environmental management agency for the watershed. Our work includes protecting against flooding and erosion, managing conservation and recreational lands, promoting environmental stewardship and education. HCA owns or manages 4,732 hectares (11,695 acres) of land representing 10% of the watershed and almost 175km of trails.



A Healthy Watershed for Everyone

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