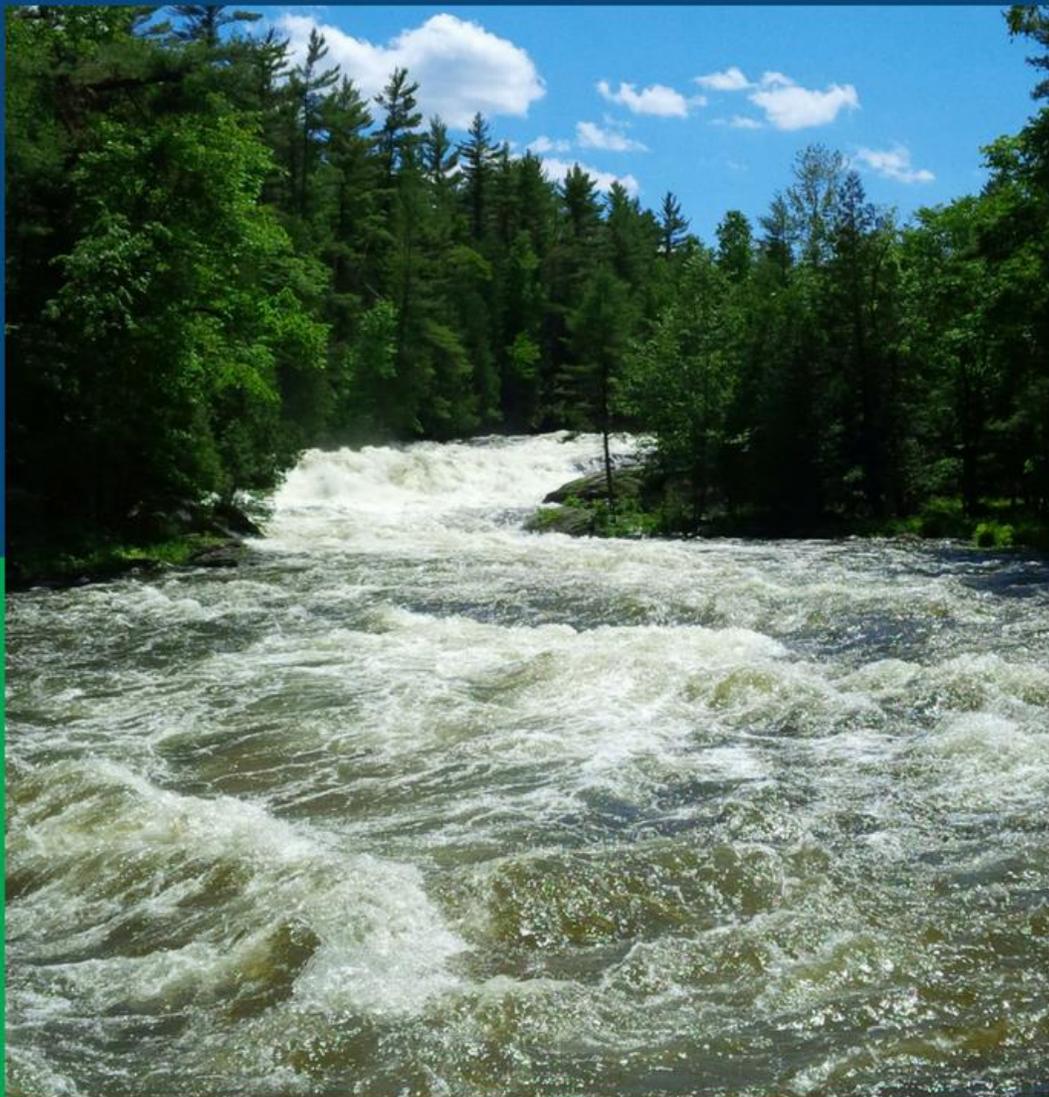


Strategic Priorities 2016 – 2019

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



Introduction

This report is intended to provide guidance in establishing a range of priority actions for MVCA to fulfill its mandate and responsibilities as it addresses the emerging challenges which MVCA will need to contend with over the next four years.

Mandate

The role and mandate of a Conservation Authority is established through Section 20 of the Conservation Authorities Act of Ontario (Act);

***20. (1)** The objects of an authority are to establish and undertake, in the area over which it has jurisdiction, a program designed to further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources other than gas, oil, coal and minerals. R.S.O. 1990, c. C.27, s. 20.*

These objects are broad and provide the Conservation Authority's Board of Directors with the ability to define and implement a resource management program which addresses local needs and financial capacity. Both the coverage and progress in implementing this program is solely a local decision of the municipally appointed members which constitute the Board of Directors.

Provincial Interest

Flood Control

Since the 1950's the provincial government has found it advantageous to use the conservation authorities as a vehicle to address provincial resource management interests. Most notably, following Hurricane Hazel in 1954, the province developed a comprehensive program aimed at reducing flood risk across the province and where conservation authorities existed, established provincial transfer payments for the authorities to deliver various aspects of the provincial program including:

- Construction, operation and maintenance of water and erosion control structures, including land acquisition. These structures were not just dams but included channelization works and other flood control measures.
- Flood forecasting and warning
- Commenting and providing advice to approval authorities on land use planning as it related to the CA mandate. This role culminated in the CA's receiving delegated responsibility in 1995 to provide sole commenting authority on land use planning matters related to flood and erosion hazards.
- Administration and enforcement of regulations made under Section 28 of the Conservation Authorities Act. These are currently called Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses regulations.

Wetlands

As part of the provincial wetland conservation policy framework, in 2004 the province passed Ont. Regulation 97/04 which required conservation authority regulations, adopted under Section 28 of the Conservation Authorities Act to include the regulation of wetlands.

Low Water Response

Where conservation authorities exist, they have been assigned responsibility through the Ontario Low Water Response Program to confirm low water conditions within their local watershed and to establish and coordinate a local Water Response Team. Throughout a declared low water condition, conservation authorities will continue to monitor precipitation and stream flow conditions and advise local and provincial agencies.

Source Water Protection

Most recently, the provincial interest has been directed towards source water protection and the preparation Source Protection Plans. In accordance with the Clean Water Act (2006) Conservation Authorities are designated as Source Protection Authorities with specific responsibilities for the preparation and submission of Source Protection Plans and the subsequent submission of annual progress reports.

Strategic Directions

The following goals, strategies and priority actions are intended to guide the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority in fulfilling its legislated mandate and delegated responsibilities within a sound, transparent and accountable corporate structure.

Integrated Watershed Management

Over the past fifteen years, we have witnessed the emergence of a number of water management issues in Ontario. While dominated by the Walkerton tragedy and the subsequent efforts to enhance the protection of drinking water, Ontario has also had to deal with significant droughts, Great Lakes issues, severe urban flooding, continuing urban development pressures and aging infrastructure. Overarching all of these are the impacts of climate change on water resources. The nature and scale of these issues suggest that there is both a need and an opportunity to develop a more coordinated approach to water management through an Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) framework. Significant advances in this regard have been achieved through partnerships with the City of Ottawa to update flood risk mapping. Climate change vulnerability assessments are advancing in collaboration with local partners, other conservation authorities and federal and provincial agencies. Watershed health reporting through the CA Watershed Report Cards is being recognized as the “best practice” to communicate both at a local and provincial scale.

IWM has been accepted internationally as an effective approach to managing water resources and has become the cornerstone of Conservation Authority watershed-based programs. IWM is the process of managing human activities and natural resources in an area defined by watershed boundaries. It is an evolving and continuous process through which decisions are made for the sustainable use, development, restoration and protection of ecosystem features, functions and linkages. Integrated watershed management allows us to address multiple issues and objectives; and enables us to plan within a very complex and uncertain environment.

The following strategies are designed to facilitate an integrated approach to watershed management which is founded on sound science but contends with the inevitable uncertainty through an adaptive management process.

Strategic Goal #1

Facilitate integrated watershed management across MVCA's jurisdiction through the provision of information, knowledge and collaboration.

Strategies:

1.1 Develop and maintain a watershed information management system to monitor core watershed indicators and develop state-of-the-art analytical and decision support tools to assess and report on significant watershed stressors and the resulting physical, chemical and biological changes.

2016-2019 Priorities

Watershed monitoring

Continue implementation of the MVCA Watershed Monitoring Strategy specifically:

- Advancing a City Stream Watch Program in conjunction with the City of Ottawa, RVCA and SNC
- Conducting sub-watershed monitoring and reporting across the MVCA
- Conduct wetland monitoring and assessment in collaboration with partners

Information Management

- Integrate all water quality data into the WISKI SODA platform
- Secure GIS Specialist position. Currently this position has been supported through the City of Ottawa Flood Risk Mapping Update Program
- Establish reserve fund to update DRAPE imagery on a five year cycle
- Conduct data analysis to update/verify wetland boundary mapping

1.2 Undertake surveys and studies to provide information and inform decision making related to watershed conditions.

2016-2019 Priorities

- Complete refinement and scenario testing of the CANWET water quality model
- Complete climate change vulnerability assessments across multiple themes

1.3 In collaboration with stakeholders, facilitate and participate in local planning initiatives to establish, communicate and achieve both short and long term watershed management objectives.

2016-2019 Priorities

Watershed planning

- Initiate a comprehensive watershed plan across the Mississippi River watershed. Recent policy changes introduced by MNR have removed provincial oversight of the Mississippi River Water Management Plan along with other similar plans across the province. While MVCA does not have any legal authority over the operation of private dams, it is recognized as having the responsibility to engage the public and other stakeholders in establishing long term resource management objectives.
- Complete climate change adaptation strategy in collaboration with watershed stakeholders based on completed vulnerability assessments.

1.4 Continually evaluate progress and provide general direction to programs and activities in achieving watershed management objectives and strategic priorities.

Strategic Goal #2

Design and implement programs to minimize the risk to life and property damage from flood, drought erosion and slope stability hazards.

Strategies:

2.1 Identify and assess risks associated with existing flood, drought, erosion and slope stability hazards and develop strategies to minimize associated risks.

2016-2019 Priorities

- Complete Phase 1 of the City of Ottawa Flood Risk Mapping Program and initiate Phase 2 in cooperation with the City of Ottawa.
- Complete Flood Risk Mapping update of the lower Mississippi River, Indian River and Cody Creek

2.2 Operate and maintain MVC dams and their associated reservoirs to minimize the effects of flooding and maintain effective liaison with other dam owners/operators to provide coordinated operations and response.

2016-2019 Priorities

- Complete asset management planning for MVCA water and erosion controls structures
- Undertake rehabilitation/reconstruction of the Shabomeka Lake Dam
- Initiate reconstruction of the Kashwakamak Lake Dam
- Undertake reconstruction of the Pine Lake Dam
- Complete structural assessments of the Bennett Lake and Big Gull Lake Dams
- Continue on-going operation and preventative maintenance of MVCA water control structures

2.3 Continuously monitor weather systems to forecast potential flood risk and provide an early warning to provincial and municipal emergency response officials and the public.

2016-2019 Priorities

- Continue to employ and develop the WISKI SODA platform in collaboration with the Eastern Ontario CA Hub
- Integrate weather radar with hydrologic/hydraulic modeling capabilities to improve short term forecasting

2.4 Review and comment on planning applications with respect to Section 3.1- Natural Hazards of the Provincial Policy Statement in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding dated January 23, 2001.

2016-2019 Priorities

- Secure intermediate planning and water resources engineering positions to address anticipated development activity occurring in the City of Ottawa and adjacent municipalities

2.5 Administer and enforce Ontario Regulation 153/06 under Section 28 of the Conservation Authorities Act in accordance with approved policies.

2016-2019 Priorities

- Continue with compliance and enforcement program
- Monitor implementation of the Carp River Restoration project
- Update/revise Regulation Policies to implement regulation of all wetlands in accordance with proposed criteria

Strategic Goal #3

Develop and implement programs designed to maintain, restore and where possible improve the diversity and connectivity of natural features and the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems recognizing linkages between natural heritage features and areas, surface water features and ground water features.

Strategies:

3.1 Promote effective stewardship actions to protect, improve or restore vulnerable surface and ground water, sensitive surface water features and sensitive ground water features, and their hydrologic functions.

2016-2019 Priorities

- Continue implementation of the Carp Action Plan to rehabilitate the Carp River and tributaries downstream of the Kanata West area
- Collaborate with local partners (Ottawa River Keeper, Ducks Unlimited, Stewardship Councils, MVFN) to support watershed stewardship
- Continue to promote and support septic re-inspection services in cooperation with member municipalities
- Continue to provide forest management services to the Lanark County Community Forest

3.2 In collaboration with partners protect municipal drinking water supplies and designated vulnerable areas.

2016-2019 Priorities

- In collaboration with RVCA and through the M-R Source Protection Office implement monitoring and reporting requirements of the Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Plan
- Provide Risk Management Services at the request of member municipalities

3.3 Promote stormwater management practices to minimize stormwater volumes and contaminant loads, and maintain or increase the extent of vegetative and pervious surfaces.

2016-2019 Priorities

- Promote, monitor and assist in the design and implementation of Low Impact Development measures
- Support application of headwater feature protection protocol

Strategic Goal #4

Raise awareness and understanding in watershed residents of how we impact the environment and the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems.

Strategies:

4.1 Deliver a structured conservation education experience directed towards school aged children.

2016-2019 Priorities

- Enhance in-school programming including a climate change theme

4.2 Promote a conservation ethic by providing opportunities for the public to experience nature in a variety of unique natural settings.

2016-2019 Priorities

- Establish an annual reserve allocation to support on-going development and maintenance of MVCA conservation Areas and facilities
- Finalize agreement with Lanark County Municipal Trails Corporation for management of the K&P Trail
- Secure part-time conservation areas planning position

4.3 Relay conservation information to the public and solicit community support in accomplishing MVCA's objectives.

2016-2019 Priorities

- Complete 2017 issue of the Watershed Report Card
- Continue sub-watershed reporting

Strategic Goal #5

Provide cost effective administrative support functions.

Strategies:

5.1 Financial Reporting and Accounting

2016-2019 Priorities

- Continue financial monitoring, reporting and planning efforts
- Continue to investigate opportunities to secure alternative sources of revenue which supports and furthers MVCA's mandate (MVCF, hydro-generation, provision of services to non- CA serviced areas of member municipalities)

5.3 Administration

2016-2019 Priorities

- Acquire and implement electronic document management system
- Continue to address AODA obligations
- Continue to plan and prepare for staff and member succession

5.4 Health and Safety

2016-2019 Priorities

- Continue implementation of a proactive health and safety program to insure a safe work environment and fulfill legislative and regulatory obligations

5.5 Implement an effective Fleet Management program

2016-2019 Priorities

- Implement fleet replacement program